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ON ARTICLES IN ***NHQ***

WITH A VIEW

TO PUBLICATION AS LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NHQ, P.O.Box 3, BUDAPEST 1426, HUNGARY

László Péter

The National Community and its Past

Reflections on the *History of Transylvania*

What primarily distinguishes a community from an aggregate of individuals is a shared vision of the future. And there cannot be a sense of a future without a memory of a shared past, a lived memory. Zoltán Szabó wrote that "the past is what has not passed away; it survives in us after calendar time has elapsed; it lives in our active memory; it unravels, revises, reforms and sometimes creates; it is never idle".[1] How the past is remembered, memorialized by individuals, will largely shape the vision of a community about its future. This is as true of the modern nation as it was of other communities of earlier ages. These twin beliefs define a community. The impressive, intimidatingly large literature which has sprung up since the Second World War on the modern nation has tried but largely failed to explain why some groups of people do and others don't develop a distinct national identity. The so called objective criteria like geography, economic interest, political institutions, common descent, religion, even a common language, or any combination of these, do not provide a satisfactory explanation. We are, however, on much firmer ground if, instead of inquiring into the causes of nationalism, we lower our sights and merely ask what lends identity to a nation. Plainly it is the shared belief in the future of the group which, in turn, necessarily involves a claim to a common past.[2] No nation is, or can be, formed without a past which is the absolute sanction of the group's continued existence. It is primarily the nation's intellectuals who create the past and disseminate it among the community. "Where the service of the past has been urgently needed, truth has ever been at a discount", wrote J. H. Plumb.[3] The glorious past or, at any rate, a past which enables the nationalist to make a claim to a future, is thus indispensable, and the need for it can be felt to be so overwhelming that the scholar historian may, in the service of his nation, even invent it.

The past has much to answer for, such as the persistence of social conflicts, so many of which are intractable because the opponents disagree about how and why their discord has come to be what it is. National conflicts apppear insoluble because the irreconcilable accounts of the past have themselves created the

László Péter *left Hungary in 1956. He is Reader in Hungarian History at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London.*

rival nations as permanently fixed entities, and because conflicting pasts create mutually destructive visions about a society's future. The rival élites of multinational societies instinctively know what Winston obediently repeated after O'Brien in George Orwell's novel: "Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past".[4]

The intellectual ferment that accompanied the birth of nationalism in multicommunal Hungary, and especially in Transylvania, produced rival beliefs in ancient descent, indigenousness and a distant golden age in which high levels of culture had been achieved. The Daco-Roman continuity theory about the origins of the Rumanians was by no means unique. Saxon (Transylvanian German) scholars claimed in the eighteenth century that their nation, as descendants of the Goths, had lived in Transylvania since the Great Migrations.[5] Not to be outdone by the Hungarian nobility, who had claimed continuous occupation from the tenth century, the *Csíki krónika,* which proved to be a forgery, put the arrival of the Szekels centuries before the Hungarian conquest.[6] István Horvát, a much adored professor at Pest and a prolific writer, discovered the forebears of the Hungarians in the Old Testament.[7] Horvát's views were ridiculed by the clergyman Mihail Lutskay in his *Historia Carpathico-Ruthenorum in Hungaria* which populated the Ancient World with Slavs and claimed with equal zeal that they had been Pannonia's indigenous people.[8] Most of these ideas did not outlast the critical examination of nineteenth century scholarship; only the Daco-Roman theory survived into the twentieth. The claim about the Sumerian origins of the Hungarian language, which has recently been revived by exiles in the Americas, as a reaction to the Rumanian origin theory, has a following in Transylvania, although the theory has never been taken seriously by Hungarian linguists.

The nobility in Hungary and Transylvania had less need than their rivals to resort to eccentric theories in creating a national past. However insecurely, they had possessed social power and political institutions continuously for centuries; they 'controlled the present'. The past of the nobility was interpreted as the history of the Hungarian people. Likewise, the *egységes magyar állam,* the concept of the unitary Hungarian State, through the equation of 'state', 'regnum' and 'crown', was explained into the Kingdom of St Stephen.[9] The Hungarian view of the past did not obliterate Transylvania's internal diversity but, as László Kővári's six volume *History of Transylvania* (1859-66), exemplifies, not much was said about the Rumanians. The Hungarian nationalist account of Transylvania's history was indeed, to borrow a phrase from Robert Pynsent, "economical with the past" of the Rumanians and the Saxons. Marginalized in politics, they were marginalized in the history of Transylvania, which became disproportionately Hungarian. This attitude to the past corresponded to Hungarian political aspirations: the securing of Hungarian supremacy rather than the obliterating of all diversity.

The loss of Transylvania in 1918 caused a severe shock to Hungarian morale. Neither the public nor the government accepted the new boundaries as final. Yet, a few Hungarian historians in the inter-war years began to look at the Hungarian

national past critically. In the post-war years the re-examination of the national past and the rejection of "bourgeois nationalism" became central aims of Marxist historiography.[10] The debates in the 1960s[11] eventually led to major reassessments, particularly under the influence of the works of Erik Molnár and Jenő Szűcs'.[12] Marxist historians did not merely reject the nationalist view of the past, asserting the primacy of "social class" in contrast with that of the "nation": they examined and, step by step, reconstructed the nationalist historical outlook. Political conditions helped this re-examination of the past in two respects. First, the Kádár regime tolerated debate within limits (and the limits themselves gradually became less strict). Second, not only the government, but also the public, has by now accepted the Trianon borders: territorial revisionism was abandoned and the policy pursued by the government in the interwar years was reproved.

There has been no critical re-examination of the nationalist view of Transylvania's past by the Rumanians since 1918. In the inter- war years, the "control of the present" implied domination rather than a consistent attempt to obliterate non-Rumanian national cultures. Correspondingly, Rumanian historians were "economical with the past" of the Saxons, the Hungarians and other groups, but did not deny their existence. In this respect Rumanian attitudes did not altogether differ from Hungarian attitudes before 1918. For a few years after the Second World War, when Rumanian policy was based on cooperation with the national minorities, past cultural diversity was unambiguously acknowledged in official statements.

Rumanian attitudes to the past changed after the 1956 Hungarian revolution and particularly after a new assertive nationalist political course was inaugurated by Ceausescu in the 1960s. The "control of the present" has since been exploited to create a homogeneous Rumanian society in which there would be no room for national diversity. *Pari passu* the rejection of future existence for Transylvania's national minorities, a new past has been created from which most elements of national cultural diversity is obliterated.[13] In the new historical perspective, Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldavia, the three Lands out of which modern Rumania was formed in 1918, had, for two thousand years, possessed a Rumanian character. Non-Rumanians were, throughout history, interlopers of one kind or another. The thesis of the Daco-Roman origins and historic unity of the three Rumanian Lands bolsters the political claim to a pure Rumania, and Hungarians (especially of Hungary), who reject the new past in order to protect the minorities' future existence, are frequently labelled as territorial revisionists. The new view of the past survived the fall of Ceausescu in 1989. In today's Rumania a large number of people believes that Rumania's territorial integrity is threatened if the national minorities are allowed to be educated in their own languages. Anti-Hungarian and anti-Gypsy riots took place in Tirgu Mures in March 1990 when a pharmacist put up a bilingual sign. The fact that the town under the name of Marosvásárhely used to be entirely, and still is half, Hungarian does not count for much in the light of this new Rumanian perspective. The apogee of the new

attitude to the past is the pejorative label *bozgor*, which Rumanian radicals attach to Hungarians and other national minorities. *Bozgor* means "person without a homeland". From this perspective, when the national minorities demand language rights, they are held to be abusing Rumanian hospitality.

The movement which today spearheads the agitation for a "pure Romania" and rejects any cultural diversity in the past, is the Transylvanian based Vatra Romaneasca (Rumanian Hearth). Vatra's slogan: "Transylvania was ours; it is ours now, and it will always be so",[15] implies that Hungarian requests for minority rights protection should be dismissed as unreasonable demands for "special privileges" by "separatists" whose true aims are the undermining of Rumania's historic unity and the taking of Transylvania from its rightful owners. Vatra's influence on government policy is still limited. Many educated Rumanians find Vatra's language repugnant and want to improve Rumanian-Hungarian relations.

Observers looking at the conflict from the outside frequently fail to recognize its true context: the invective deployed by Vatra radicals against Hungarians and other national minorities is the product not so much of anxiety about territorial revisionism (for which there has been no evidence for half a century) as of a craving, generated by the new historicism, to create a pure Rumania.[16] One misunderstanding easily leads to another. Western travellers frustrated by the amount of "history" hurled at them by each side when they ask straightforward questions about the cause of today's discontent, sometimes throw up their hands in despair and conclude that the Rumanian-Hungarian conflict is intractable because each side regards Transylvania as "the cradle" of its own national culture.[17] This is a gross exaggeration. Transylvania was, indeed, the region where the modern Rumanian national movement sprang up, a fact of which educated Rumanians as well as independent foreign scholars are aware.[18] Transylvania's role in the making of Hungarian culture was more limited. Hungarians have sometimes claimed that, uncontaminated by foreign influences, the Szekels spoke the purest Hungarian.[19] Historians claim that for a century and a half after Mohács (1526), Transylvania was one of the citadels of Hungarian culture[20] and that the province's independence helped the survival of the Hungarian people.[21] Other historians expressly denied that Transylvania had played any special role in Hungarian national development.[22] Hungarian public opinion reflects a wide variety of views on Transylvania's role, but the claim that Transylvania was the cradle of Hungarian culture has never been made.

National communities are not slaves to the single dominating influence of some established view of the past. Research into history can be a modifying influence. A community's transmitted attitudes to its own past should be distinguished from the study of history as a discipline. Whereas the former is an intellectual process in the service of politics, the latter aims to recreate the past in its own terms and for its own sake. This distinction is valid even though the two activities may not be in a great many cases clearly separable. Exploring the distinction, J. H. Plumb, in three incisive and illuminating

lectures given in New York in the spring of 1968, declared that the past was dying: "industrial society", unlike its predecessors, "does not need the past"[23]. It has been destroyed, Plumb argued, by the critical, objective and scientific work carried out by professional historians. But the news about "the death of the past" was greatly exaggerated[24]. As long as the world is organized in national societies (and this has shown no sign of diminishing), what professional historians write for other professional historians will not satisfy ordinary men. They need a broad sweep of history. Furthermore, there is everywhere a near consensus that some fundamental knowledge about the past should be disseminated in the public and that the basics of the national past should be taught in school.[25] It is also true, however, that the influence of independent, critical scholarship on widely held views on the past can substantially reduce and contain national conflicts. Views on history can never be "objective", but they could be much less biased than the transmitted attitudes that antagonize rival communities.

Ideas that serve the political needs of a national community and the results of independent critical scholarship can appear together even between the covers of a single book. One could argue that the *History of Transylvania* published by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1986, is a good example.[26] The origins of the project, on which over a dozen historians worked for nearly ten years, go back to the 1970s, when under pressure from the public, the Kádár regime, after much hesitation, allowed the plan to be included in the programme of the Institute of History in Budapest. The educated public and the historians had been concerned about the position of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania and about the claim that Transylvania had been Rumanian throughout history. While Rumanian historians published general works on the history of Transylvania, in foreign languages as well as in Rumanian, no history of Transylvania had been written by Hungary's historians. Frustrated by what many of them felt to be a long silence on Transylvania, the scholars taking on the project responded to the political needs of the educated public; they were not merely attempting to satisfy disinterested scholarly curiosity about the past. Hungary's historians, like the Hungarian public, regarded Transylvanian Hungarians as culturally part of the Hungarian nation. Ineluctably, as all national histories by definition do, the *History of Transylvania* was written from a Hungarian perspective.

Nevertheless, the *History of Transylvania* should not be regarded as a work written to support some political plan.[27] There is no evidence for suspecting the authors of some ulterior design, like territorial revisionism, which they all rejected. For all that has been said about its provenance, this was an outstanding achievement of independent critical scholarship. In his preface the editor, Béla Köpeczi, claimed that the work was an attempt to write about Transylvania's past as the history of its three ethnic groups, Rumanian and Saxon as well as Hungarian, by using the sources of all three.[28] Contributors expressed their own divergent and conflicting views; no common editorial view was imposed.[29] The results were nearly 2000 pages of trenchant facts critically examined and brought together in the terms of the past and in a largely impartial manner. The *History*

of Transylvania was not polemical, although contributors expressed opinions which on many subjects conflicted with official Rumanian views. They might have been inaccurate on many points, partly because of their insufficient knowledge and partly because of their national bias.[30] But their avowed aim was to overcome bias which, as they also recognized, could never be fully accomplished.[31] They tried to break away from the "romantic-nationalist" one-sided attitude to Transylvania's seventeenth-century history. They also roundly condemned Hungarian nineteenth-century nationality policies. They did not try, consciously at least, to whitewash Hungarian rule.[32]

Publication created a stir. The Hungarian public was pleased, although probably few people had the stamina to read through all three volumes. The press and the scholarly journals wrote much about the work; a conference was organized by the University in Debrecen with the contributors and other historians, and its proceedings were subsequently published.[33] A single volume abridgement was compiled[34] to provide a more serviceable text for translation into German,[35] English and French.[36] The *History of Transylvania* received favourable notices in periodicals abroad, except in Rumania.

The Ceausescu regime attacked the book. It was denounced as a "forgery", a piece of revisionist propaganda. The Hungarian Academy of Sciences defended its work and invited Rumanian historians to meet their Hungarian colleagues to discover if a rapprochement was possible. The invitation was not taken up. Today Rumanian and Hungarian historians are generally sceptical about the prospects of any rapprochement in the near future. Yet, there have always been scholars in both countries who have welcomed dialogue through which each side "considers the arguments of the other with an open mind". Domokos Kosáry mentions the meetings Hungarian historians had with Slovak and Serbian historians which helped to generate tolerant attitudes towards each other's different views. Impartiality is not an either-or quality; it is a matter of degree; it depends on attitudes. And attitudes can change. "Sometimes I almost wish", writes Domokos Kosáry, "that some evidence were found which would demonstrate Rumanian ethnic continuity in Transylvania, because once that problem were disposed of, conflict between Rumanian and Hungarian scholars would diminish".[41]

Béla Borsi-Kálmán, in his reflections on Francisc Pacurariu's collection of essays on Rumanian-Hungarian relations, examines the question of the historian's openness. The scholar, he argues, must acquire empathy and imaginative insight without which he will never be able to understand the sensibilities of someone who holds views radically different from his. Both Rumanians and Hungarians are hampered by lack of self-knowledge in acquiring the ability to emphathize with the other side, argues Borsi-Kálmán. The Rumanians are frustrated because, notwithstanding their repeated successes in foreign policy, the have not established "European standards" in much of their social life; the Hungarians, on the other hand, have not digested their traumatic experience of losing an empire in 1918. Trianon still haunts Hungarians. But history need not be a form of therapy that improves national morale at the expense of a neighbour.

History, painful or not, can be a source of wisdom which deepens our understanding of our social experience. If, as it has been argued, conflicting memories of the past lie at the core of, rather than merely reflect, national conflicts, the historian may be better placed than others to dismantle antagonistic beliefs held by national communities about each other.[44]

NOTES

1. Zoltán Szabó, *Terepfelverés,* ed. Lóránt Czigány, Bern, 1987, p. 236. The context was the 1956 Hungarian revolution. András Sütő wrote: "Deny men the right of remembrance and you have torn them asunder", *Anyám könnyű álmot ígér,* Bucharest, 1971, p. 68.
2. Even the claim to a separate language can be posterior to the sense of the distinct identity of a national community. As the late Robert Auty, Professor of Comparative Slavonic Linguistics in Oxford, used to emphasize, no scientific, verifiable criteria exist upon which one can distinguish between dialects and separate languages. E.g. Croat is a language separate from Serbian because the Croats claim that it is.
3. *The Death of the Past,* London 1969, p. 32.
4. *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* Pt III, ch.2.
5. See Elemér Illyés, *Ethnic Continuity in the Carpatho-Danubian Area,* New York, 1988, pp. 35-37.
6. On the forgery, see Lajos Szádeczky, *A Csíki Székely Krónika,* Budapest, 1905.
7. *Rajzolatok a magyar nemzet legrégibb történeteiből,* Pest, 1825, and see Lajos Lékai, *A magyar történetírás* 1790-1830, Budapest, 1942, p. 77. Horvát had no followers.
8. *Magyarország története* 1790-1848, ed. G.Mérei, Budapest 1980, p. 1192. Lutskay's work remained in manuscript.
9. The history of the Kingdom, the Lands of the Hungarian Crown, transmogrified, became the history of the Hungarian (unitary) State. Rumanian historians frequently make the point that Transylvania was a part of Hungary only between 1867 and 1918. It is true that Hungarian historians do not consistently distinguish Hungary proper (to which Transylvania did not belong before 1867) from the Kingdom of Hungary (to which Transylvania always belonged). Protesting against the millennium celebrations in April 1896, the Congress of Hungary's Nationalities insisted on the valid point that the Kingdom before the nineteenth century had never been a 'Hungarian national state'. Gábor G. Kemény, *Iratok a nemzetiségi kérdés történetéhez...,* II, Budapest, 1956, p. 473.
10. Some scholars even argued, that Hungarian historians ought to criticize only Hungarian nationalism and its rivals not at all. For an interesting debate on this point, see *Századok,* 1957, no. 5-6, pp. 898-900.
11. L.Péter, 'New Approaches to Modern Hungarian History', *Ungarn-Jahrbuch,* Munich, 1972, pp. 161ff; idem, 'A Debate on the History of Hungary between 1790 and 1945', *Slavonic and East European Review,* 50, 1972, pp. 442ff.
12. J. Szűcs, *A nemzet historikuma és a történetszemlélet nemzeti látószöge,* Budapest, 1970; idem, *Nation und Geschichte:* Studien, Budapest, 1981.
13. Rumanian historians leave out the national minorities entirely from the history of Transylvania, writes Elemér Illyés, *(Erdély változása,* München, 1975, pp. 270-71). They undoubtedly do, but then, Illyés's work is just as ethnocentric. *The Times* reported (25 May 1990) that 'up to 300 medieval Transylvanian walled churches... face destruction within two years... Dr Matei Lykiardopol, a leading Rumanian architect said that 'the churches built between the 12th and 15th centuries by German colonists, would soon be derelict'. There is a lack of official concern. 'In the 1970s Ceausescu dissolved the Restoration Committee ... there is no money'. Dr Lykiardopol also said: 'there is a primitive instinct among people here to want to destroy the old'. The basic work on the wilful destruction of historic monuments is Dinu D. Giurescu's *The Razing of Romania's Past,* New York, 1989. In the 1970s the Ceausescu regime systematically collected church and old

private libraries and archives. They were placed under the control of the interior ministry. Since then most of these collections have not been available for research and even the whereabouts of some of them are not known. These measures were Orwellian. O'Brien: 'We, the Party, control all records and we control all memories. Then we control the past, do we not?', *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* Pt III, ch. 2. On recent improvements, see Martyn Rady's 'Transylvanian Libraries and Archives in Contemporary Romania, *Journal of the Society of Archivists,* Vol. 12, No2 autumn 1991, pp. 123-26.

14. D.Jones, ed. *And the Walls Came Tumbling Down,* London, 1990, p.24.
15. A passage from a Vatra leaflet, issued shortly before the riots at Tirgu Mures in March 1990 well illustrates how views on the past can make a national conflict intractable: "Transylvania was ours; it is ours now, and it will always be so. Sadly, the sacred Rumanian soil is now besmirched with the imprint of the Asiatic Huns (Hungarians), Gypsies and other remnants. Let us unite to drive them from our land!... We want an enlarged and pure Rumania. We want back every bit of stolen Rumanian land. It is now or never! We should not fear fighting them nor shedding their dirty blood. Now is the best time to free ourselves of them. We have already driven out some of the Germans, but there are plenty of others whom we do not need. Do everything to get rid of them! Ceausescu failed to do enough to destroy them. We do not want to be another Switzerland. We have no need at all of Europe. We are Rumanians!" It has recently transpired that Vatra disowned the leaflet as a 'forgery' (the term comes easily to the lips of Rumanian radical nationalists); whoever was the 'forger', it is, as an appeal to the past, a remarkable specimen.
16. However unjustified, fear of Hungarian revisionism could just conceivably be a genuine explanation for Vatra's violently anti-Hungarian attitudes. But Vatra is as antisemitic, anti-German and anti-Gypsy as it is anti-Hungarian and so its attitudes could not be explained by anxiety concerning the territorial integrity of Rumania.
17. Claudio Magris wrote that "Transylvania has been a cradle of Hungarian culture, at least since the eighteenth century ... It is also the cradle of the Rumanian national consciousness". *Danube,* London, 1989. 314 pp. *The Times'* correspondents habitually repeat the cliché. Ernest Beck reporting on 28 February 1990 on the deteriorating relations betweeen Hungary and Rumania, remarked that Transylvania was 'the birthplace of their respective cultures'. Richard Bassett predicted on 23 May 1990 that Hungarians would not 'willingly relinquish what has always been for them the cradle of their culture'.
18. The crucial role Transylvania played in the growth of Rumanian national consciousness clearly emerges from K. Hitchins' *Studies on Romanian National Consciousness,* New York, N.Y. 1983.
19. László Makkai, *Magyar-román közös múlt,* Budapest, 1948. p. 214. Transylvaniaalways had a special position in Hungarian politics: Miklós Zrinyi described it, in the seventeenth century, as 'a most precious jewel of our Crown' and Lajos Kosssuth in the nineteenth century as 'the right hand of our fatherland', Béla Tóth, *Szájrul szájra,* Budapest, 1901, pp. 42-43 and 95-96.
20. István Rácz, (ed.) *Tanulmányok Erdély történetéről,* Debrecen 1988, pp. 25-26.
21. Béla Köpeczi (ed.): *Erdély rövid története,* (Budapest 1989, p. 5. Scholars outside Hungary hold similar views. C.A. Macartney wrote that in the Turkish period 'the flickering lamp of the national independence survived only in remote Tranylvania'. *Hungary,* (Edinburgh, 1962) p. 65; R.J.W. Evans suggested that Transylvania in the seventeenth century was 'the conscience of Hungary as a whole'. *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy 1550-1700,* Oxford, 1979, p. 267; Lóránt Czigány: 'the Transylvanian princes ... attempted to preserve the Hungarian way of life and the flickering light of Hungarian culture', *The Oxford History of Hungarian Literature,* Oxford 1984, p. 32.
22. Rácz, *Tanulmányok,* p. 77.
23. *The Death of the Past,* London, 1969, p. 14.

24. Ibid., pp. 14, 106, 144.
25. The current controversy over the new history curriculum in Britain and also in Hungary is a good example.
26. Béla Köpeczi (ed.): *Erdély története,* Budapest, 1986, 3 vols. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Index.
27. Cf. Zs.P. Pach's comments in Rácz, *Tanulmányok,* pp. 18-19; see also 'Vita az Erdély monográfiáról' in *Magyar Nemzet,* 10 October 1987 (historians performed a 'public duty' in writing the *History of Transylvania)*
28. The claim that Transylvania was the history of 'three peoples', frequently stated by Hungarian historians is, of course, a projection of nineteenth-century conditions into the past. But the *History of Transylvania* also treats the Jews, Armenians and other groups. The Gypsies, however, are neglected.
29. *History of Transylvania* II, pp. 10-11.
30. E.g. the statement that Transylvania even in the fourteenth century was a 'purely geographical term' and the chapter heading for the late seventeenth century: 'Struggle for Hungarian Statehood' look very odd. *History of Transylvania,* I, p. 348 and II, p. 846. The chapter heading: 'Transylvania in the revolution and the war of independence, 1848-1849', obviously looks at the subject from a Hungarian perspective. *History of Transylvania,* III, p. 1346.
31. Kálmán Benda pointed out in the debate that the account of the social conditions in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries was uneven: it was adequate on the Székels, much less so on the Counties, and not enough was said about the Saxons and the Rumanians. Rácz, *Tanulmányok,* p. 81.
32. The 380 pages that cover the period between 1848 and 1918 is the first attempt by any work in any language to offer a critical and detailed examination of the subject, *History of Transylvania,* III, pp. 1346-1732.
33. Rácz, *Tanulmányok.* (see note 20)
34. *Erdély rövid története.* (see note 21)
35. Béla Köpeczi (ed.): *Kurze Geschichte Siebenbürgens.* Budapest, 1990, 781 p.
36. The translation into English is in preparation.
37. E.g. the full page advertisement in *The Times,* April 7, 1987.
38. *Magyar Nemzet,* 2 April 1987.
39. Domokos Kosáry "A történészek és Erdély" in: *Nemzeti fejlődés, művelődés—európai politika.* Budapest 1989, p. 103. First given as lecture at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, May 4, 1988.
40. In fact, a large number of such meetings have taken place among the historians of Central and East European countries over the last thirty years, some more fruitful than others in changing attitudes.
41. Kosáry, op.cit., p. 104.
42. *'Kihívás és eretnekség', Limes,* Budapest, 1989, I, pp. 187-211.
43. Ibid., pp. 208-09.
44. A promising start, or restart, was made at a meeting of Rumanian and Hungarian historians in the European Institute, Budapest, on 26th and 27th April 1991, *Magyar Nemzet,* 2 May 1991 (V. Ágoston).

Mihály Szegedy-Maszák

The Bourgeois as Artist Sándor Márai (1900-1989)

On February 27, 1989 I received the following letter: Dear Mr Szegedy-Maszák, I would like to apologize for not having answered your letter of last December. I have been ill, and so I could not attend to my correspondence.

It would be a pleasure to me to see you at my place. May I ask you to call me as soon as possible? My non-listed number is (619) 276-1072, and you can reach me any evening.

With kindest regards, Sándor Márai.

There are several stamps on the envelope. First the letter was sent to Lanesville in New York State, and later to South Bend, Indiana. "Your mail delayed due to incorrect zip code," reads one inscription. "Always use zip code", reads another.

The letter reached me at Indiana University three days after the *San Diego Union* had published an obituary I had dictated over the phone the day after Márai shot himself—an end he predicted in *San Gennaro vére* (The Blood of San Gennaro, 1965), an autobiographical essay-novel which identified a writer's death with the beginning of his exile.

Sándor Márai, Hungarian novelist, short-story writer, essayist, playwright, and poet, whose original name was Grosschmid, was born in Kassa on 11 April 1900, into a family belonging to the German (Saxon) bourgeoisie of what was Upper Hungary until 1920. Today this region is Slovakia and Kassa has become Kosice.

Márai attended school in his native town, in Eperjes and in Budapest. His first book, a collection of verse, was published in 1918. Having studied law in Budapest, he left Hungary in 1919 and became a respected journalist in Germany. In 1923 he married Ilona Matzner, the daughter of a Jewish merchant. In the years 1923-1928 he lived in Paris, where he knew the leading figures of the international avant-garde. After his return to Hungary, he became a highly successful novelist. In his journalism he was a harsh critic of Hitler's Germany. Since he continued to adhere to the values of bourgeois liberalism after 1945, he chose to leave

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Hungary in 1948. In 1957 he became a U.S. citizen. His poor health and a growing sense of isolation led to his suicide in his home in San Diego, California, on 21st February 1989.

Márai is the most important par excellence bourgeois writer Hungary produced in the first half of the twentieth century. Although painfully aware of the conflict between the anarchism of the artist and the values of his own class, he presented the legacy of the bourgeoisie as his country's most valuable tradition and was highly critical of the populist version of nationhood. His verse is of lesser value, but his confessional works and best novels are major achievements. Taking the example of the poet and prose writer Dezső Kosztolányi (1885-1936), he became one of the finest Hungarian prose stylists.

His early works, influenced by German Expressionism, are of historical rather than aesthetic value. *Istenek nyomában: Egy utazás regénye* (In Search of Gods: The Novel of a Journey, 1927), written at the end of the author's first period of exile, gives a shrewd analysis of the ethnic and religious conflicts in the Near East. Much more important is *Egy polgár vallomásai* (Confessions of a Man of the Middle Class, 1934-35); this was inspired by *A régi ház* (The Old House), a novel by the Conservative writer Cécile Tormay (1876-1937), published in 1914 and translated into English in 1921. Like Tormay's novel, Márai's autobiography is an important document on the values of the Magyarized bourgeoisie. The difference between the two works lies in narrative perspective. *The Old House* is a historical novel that deals with the decline of the German cities Pesth and Ofen and the birth of the Hungarian capital Budapest; *Confessions of a Man of the Middle Class* is a work of much broader dimensions. The description of the life of the German bourgeoisie of Kassa is transformed by the narrator into an impressive vision of the social stability of Central Europe before the Great War.

Márai's best works are autobiographical. *A kassai polgárok* (The Burghers of Kassa, 1942), his only successful play, is about the struggle of the citizens of his native town with the forces of feudalism. *Halotti beszéd* (Funeral Oration, 1950), his most famous poem, is a moving expression of the agony of exile. The confessional tone is characteristic not only of the diary he kept from 1943 to the 1980s but also of some of his novels. *Szindbád hazamegy* (Sindbad Returns Home, 1940) has a close-knit structure and several semantic strata: on one level, it is a novel about the writer Gyula Krúdy (1978-1933) and early capitalist Hungary, on another, it is a self-portrait of Márai in the form of a pastiche, anticipating the postmodern cult of imitation.

Although he became less prolific in his later years, he continued to publish significant works up to the very end of his life. The first volume of his diary, published in 1945, was followed by four other volumes. *Föld, föld!...* (Land Ahoy! 1972) is a sequel to *Confessions of a Man of the Middle Class*, and focuses on the end of the Second World War, the siege of Budapest, and the beginning of Soviet occupation. As an essayist he never ceased to insist on the necessity of rationalism, but as a writer of narrative fiction he presented those irreconcilable attitudes that make it impossible to come to a decision. *Itélet Canudosban*

(Judgement in Canudos, 1970), a novel about Latin America, is on the endless battle between fanatics who reject civilization and the intolerant, ruthless representatives of the legacy of the Enlightenment.

Márai's most ambitious undertaking was *A Garrenek műve* (The Work of the Garrens), a *roman fleuve*. Its concluding part was due to appear in the spring of 1948 but was not published until 1988. The dust jacket of the two large volumes carries an engraving, by a Dutch master, of Kassa in the sixteenth century.

Since very few alterations were made to the text over the last forty years of the author's life, *The Work of the Garrens* can be viewed as a novel written between the late 20s and 1946. Still, it is impossible to ignore the political changes that have taken place over the last half-century when reading Márai's longest work of fiction. At the time it was completed, the Hungarian bourgeoisie had been passing through a profound crisis. Forty years later, this same class could be described as belonging to a closed chapter of history. Because of this change in perspective, Márai's novel has become a memento of the irreparable loss caused by political persecution. It reminds us of the sad fact that after the Second World War a substantial part of Hungarian society had disappeared: some had been killed, others had died in prison or in deportation, still others had been forced to flee the country. It remains to be seen whether the nation will be able to recover from the effects of this tragedy.

In the Introduction, written in 1988, Márai suggested two possible starting-points for interpreters of his novel. One point derives from his argument that political dictatorship remained the same in the twentieth century, despite superficial changes; for the other, he pointed out that a creative, imaginative bourgeoisie had been replaced by a consumer middle class. Although it could be argued that the value of these conclusions was questionable, since they were formulated four decades after the novel had been completed, it is worth remembering that self-interpretation has a major role in *The Work of the Garrens*. A strongly confessional writer and influenced by Nietzsche's idea of eternal recurrence, Márai ranged himself squarely against those who insisted on the primary importance of plot in twentieth-century fiction. For him the secret of writing novels lay not in invention and in action full of surprises but in the art of variation. Accordingly, the five later parts of *The Work of the Garrens* can be regarded as interpretations of the opening section, "The Rebels", first published in 1930.

On one level, this introductory part is concerned with growing up. Márai's analysis of the process that leads from intimacy to homelessness has superficial resemblances with Musil's *Die Verwirrungen des Zögling Törless* (Young Törless, 1906) and with *Les enfants terribles* (translated into English as "Children of the Game"), the short novel written by Jean Cocteau the same year "The Rebels" was composed. More useful could be a comparison with Kosztolányi's short stories concerning Kornél Esti, written in the late 20s and early 30s, since Kosztolányi and Márai were friends and shared the same intellectual values and

interests. Both could be called nihilists in the Nietzschean sense. Just as Kosztolányi gave an anti-Christian interpretation of a Biblical passage in his short story "Káin"(Cain, 1916) and moved very close to existentialism in his late poem *Ének a semmiről* (A Song upon Nothing), so Márai drew a parallel between the Inquisition and twentieth century totalitarianism in his epistolary novel *Erősítő* (Strengthening, 1975) and portrayed Judas as a man of intellect in *Harminc ezüstpénz* (Thirty Pieces of Silver, 1983). Yet the difference between the attitudes of the two authors is significant: far from accepting Kosztolányi's irrationalism, Márai's belief in the power of reason was firm. His adolescents' rebellion is a mirror image of the aimless war fought by their fathers. What is more, the young boys' *action gratuite* is self-destructive and is exploited by an actor whose character foreshadows the portrayal of the "Leader" in the later parts of the novel.

Unlike action, point of view is a crucial element in Márai's art. Its variability can land complexity to a character —as in *Béke Ithakában* (Peace in Ithaca, 1951), the first novel Márai wrote after he had completed *The Work of the Garrens*. Yet the changing perspective never suggests a relativism of values, which is a feature of Kosztolányi's stories on Kornél Esti. Despite all the reservations his wife and two sons, the three narrators of *Peace in Ithaca,* express about Ulysses, the mythical hero is seen as a representative of secular reason, self-irony and freedom of will; similarly Julius Caesar brings to mind a ruthless dictator, notwithstanding the petty selfishness of all Roman citizens, in *Rómában történt valami* (Something Has Happened in Rome, 1971), a historical (or, rather, pseudohistorical) parable which carries criticism of the political compromises made by the writers Gyula Illyés and László Németh, in the decades following 1948.

Márai fully understands the psychology of not only adolescence but also unreasoning enthusiasm—in this sense the opening section of *The Work of the Garrens* anticipates the highly imaginative yet brilliantly controlled presentation of collective madness in *Judgement in Canudos*—but he associates irrationalism with the loss of personality and the danger of despotism. The rebels' target is the law formulated by the fathers, the values canonized in the name of authority. The anarchism of the younger generation is considered a sine qua non of growing up.

The Work of the Garrens starts as a novel of intellectual education. Yet the continuity, characteristic of *Bildungsromane,* is soon broken. There are twenty years between the last events narrated in "The Rebels" and the first episode of "The Jealous". At the age of thirty-seven, Péter Garren is still confronted with the dilemma of his early years, a period in which he was associated with a group of rebellious adolescents. To distance himself from the anarchism of his youth, he decides to become a businessman and settles in Germany. Yet he cannot forget his past. He has a strong desire to be an artist, and is aware of the connection between creativity and the demoniac forces of destruction. Learning of the fatal illness of his father, he has to return to his home town. His German mistress warns him that those who have left

Tolnay, Gide and Márai

The papers of Charles de Tolnay (1899-1981), director of the Casa Buonarroti of Florence from 1965, whose reputation rests on his work on Michelangelo and Hieronymus Bosch, contain a number of documents referring to Sándor Márai. Tolnay left Hungary at the age of nineteen, studying first in Vienna, then in Berlin and Frankfurt. He obtained his *Dr. habil* under Erwin Panofsky at the University of Hamburg. After Hitler came to power in 1933, Tolnay went to Paris and, in 1938 to the United States, where he taught at Princeton and Columbia. He never lost contact with things Hungarian. He frequently returned to Hungary during the twenties and the thirties, mostly to visit Lajos Fülep, the philosopher of art, the spiritual mentor of his youth. In the mid thirties, Fülep called Tolnay's attention to the younger Hungarian writers, most notably to László Németh and Gyula Illyés.

There is evidence to suggest that Tolnay became acquainted with the works of Sándor Márai thanks to László Németh,a writer closely associated with the populists. Németh thought very highly of Márai who, although a bourgeois by birth and inclination, managed to preserve his independence, keeping aloof from literary coteries, including that around the journal *Nyugat*. Tolnay soon discovered that, of all the younger writers, it was Márai he felt closest to. In corresponding with Hungarians, Tolnay often inquired about new Hungarian writing and about Márai in particular. In a letter written to Lajos Fülep after the political changes of 1945, he mentioned that he had not been able to keep up with Hungarian writing after 1938 and, therefore, "would be much obliged if you could write to me about the progress made by young Hungarian writers". The first writer he wanted to know about was Márai.

In 1948 Márai, who on principle opposed dictatorships of any kind, fled Hungary and eventually settled in Italy. It is not known how Tolnay and Márai established contact. What is known, however, is that Tolnay promptly wished to help Márai. His grand but unrealistic notion was to prepare Márai's nomination for the Nobel Prize. Tolnay devoted considerable effort to this: he asked Márai to provide a curriculum vitae; he also asked for a bibliography of Márai's works in Hungarian and in other languages and he himself undertook to write an appreciation of Márai. In 1949 he wrote: "The attitude manifest in attacks on the bourgeoisie—attacks that become ever more

their homes are destined to be alien in this world: "For you there are two seasons, two homes, and two worlds. You will miss both and you are destined to become an eternal wanderer. Never can you unpack your things."

These words, written around 1937, are of crucial importance. While the first part of *The Work of the Garrens* ends with the return of the parents from the Great War, symbolizing the restoration of a "grown-up" world controlled by authority, the second part speaks of the final disintegration of order. "What will happen if father dies?" The question asked by one of the Garren brothers has

uncontrolled as the decade goes on—pays no heed to the historical developmentsthat led to the present situation; it does not want to weigh objectively the role and importance of the bourgeoisie in the new social world-view. Those displaying hostility towards the 'bourgeoisie' do not want to either weigh things nor to compromise. They only want one thing: the total destruction of everything that is meant by the extremely complex notions designated by the words "bourgeois" and "bourgeoisie",with its values and its faults, its historical role and mission, as well as the formalities of bourgeois, existence—formalities which have perhaps become a little anachronistic. Márai considers his duty to rescue this (bourgeois) intellectual inheritance, to which he remained loyal all along with an uncompromising purity of the art and a dogged resolution, not faltering once during the devastation of recent years." Nor did Tolnay hesitate to use his own international connections. He wrote to André Gide, who had met Márai back in the twenties. Here is Gide's response to Tolnay's letter:

Monsieur, I applaud with all my heart the initiative you have taken over Márai, my own deep interest in him having in no way diminished. But beware of your own zeal as a friend: as you know, there are, properly speaking, no candidates for the Nobel Prize. When the Scandinavian jury proposed me, I was immediately told to refrain from making any intervention or from bringing any influence to bear that would compromise everything. This you are instantly asked to forget. Besides, I cannot see who I could turn to. However, do pass on to Márai my sincere feelings and warm wishes.

Cordially
André Gide

All things considered, the letter is no more than a cordial and polite evasion. It appears that Gide himself felt a little dissatisfied with his response, and, as a token of goodwill, enclosed the following note:

Lucien Maury, 13 Boulevard Raspail, who is in constant contact with members of the Nobel Jury, could offer good advice—if you were to contact him on my part.

Who this Lucien Maury was precisely (the various biographical lexicons seem to suggest that he was a natural scientist), and whether Tolnay ever turned to him, we do not know. Nor is there any evidence of further action by Tolnay in this matter. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that Gide had maintained a vivid recollection of Márai so many years after the latter's stay in Paris in the 1920s. Also remarkable is the fact that Gide actually made Tolnay his proxy in this matter, asking him to seek advice in the question of Márai's nomination "de sa part", that is, on his (Gide's) behalf.

Miklós Lackó

theological as well as Nietzschean undertones, und suggests the loss of all ultimate values.

Part III, "The Aliens", is a flashback which make the reader aware of the deeper significance of the father's approaching death No historical or geographical names are explicitly mentioned, but it is obvius that the father is the last representative of an organic culture and world view, and the aliens are foreigners whose aim is to convince the original population of the city that occupation should be regarded as liberation. The oppressor tries to justify his

act by maintaining the superiority of his values. The oppressed have a limited choice. Tamás Garren becomes a traitor by joining a movement controlled by a "Leader", his sister Anna turns her back on the world and sinks deeper and deeper into provincialism, and Péter decides to settle in another country. "We all die because of Trianon", said Kosztolányi, on his deathbed, of the peace treaty which led to the loss of more than two thirds of the territory of Hungary in 1920, as reported by Márai in a newspaper article on September 4, 1938. When writing "The Aliens", the author drew upon his memories of Kassa under Czechoslovak rule; his intention was to characterize the creator and the destroyer of a culture in a general sense.

For Márai foreign occupation is a state of mind, a form of collective consciousness. In his novel the oppressor's aim is to obliterate the memory of the past. In the central episode of "The Aliens", a piece of sculpture is swept from the top of the cathedral by a tornado. The cathedral, built in the thirteenth century, is a powerful symbol of the continuity of the culture of the city's burghers. After the storm damage, the new rulers of the country fail to repair it. The degradation of the traditional centre of the city starts simultaneously with the illness of the head of the Garren family. By the time Péter Garren has left his adopted country for his homeland, his father is almost dead.

Márai treats his country as a chronotope. From his perspective Hungary is a temporal as well as spatial configuration. The message comes too late for Péter Garren: by the time it reaches him, his country has ceased to exist. Realizing this, he sets himself a difficult, perhaps even impossible, task. His desire is to reconstruct a past now sunk into oblivion, restore the sense of continuity and create a work of art which, to future generations, would give some idea of the culture of old Hungarian towns. His attempt to achieve this confronts him with a dilemma. Remembering his rebellious youth, he recognizes that the bourgeois and the artist live in incompatible worlds. The former belongs to an organic community which has specific laws and duties, whereas the latter seeks originality and prefers anarchy to order. The fourth part of Márai's *roman fleuve*, "The Offended: The Voice", written in the first person, is the tortured confession of a man with a double identity. The memory of a scene in which an actor forced his will upon young boys—a crucial episode of "The Rebels"—reminds the hero of the demonic element in art. Péter Garren is aware that creation involves a dangerous game with irrational forces. What is more, he knows the difference between culture and art, craftsman and genius.

His aim is a synthesis of bourgeois morality and artistic creation. Drawing inspiration from such bourgeois artists as Goethe and Thomas Mann, he rejects the view that writing is a mission, a form of salvation or prophecy. For him creation is life and a mode of existence. Some may find his conception of art limited, but he feels it justified in the light of the political implications of irrationalism.

These implications are emphasized in "Sign and Sense", the fifth part of the novel, which contains two long scenes. The first is a visionary presentation of a

"Leader" addressing a mass demonstration, and the second is about the visit Péter Garren pays to a famous writer, Berten, who has been placed under house-arrest by the authorities. Both scenes are based on personal experience. In 1933 Márai attended a meeting held in the Berlin Sport Palace, where Hitler made a speech, and later he interviewed the playwright, novelist and poet Gerhart Hauptmann (1862-1946) about his attitude towards the Third Reich. Both incidents were reported on by Márai in newspaper articles before they were transformed into parts of his novel. In their fictionalized versions they have a secondary meaning which goes beyond their original historical context. Hitler's name is not even mentioned in the novel, and the scene in which the "Leader" succeeds in manipulating his audience is a variation on the chapter in "The Rebels" in which an actor mesmerizes a group of adolescents. Fanatics lose their personalities and are controlled by "the centre", that is, a small group which has power and is alienated from the community. The meeting of the two writers has also a general import. Berten's hypothesis is that only those communities whose memory is discontinuous can be manipulated from above. In other words, despotism is made possible by the destruction of historical consciousness, the distortion of collective memory.

One of the clichés of Marxist historiography is that Hungary has never had an organic bourgeois culture. Márai's aim was to show that precisely the opposite is true. The ultimate irony of his six-part novel is that it is the shocking portrayal of the decline and fall of the bourgeoisie in "The Survivors", the conclusion of *The Work of the Garrens,* which has to convince the reader that one of the worst consequences of political oppression has been the transformation of Hungary into a country with a history of backwardness.

For forty years Márai continued to write and publish in Hungarian abroad and his works were inaccessible in Hungary. No other Hungarian writer has ever had such a fate. The reason for this distortion of the past is quite obvious: those critics and historians who identified Hungarian culture with the traditions of the gentry (such as György Lukács and József Révai) could not find a place for a writer whose works were in sharp contradiction to their sweeping generalizations. To the best of my knowledge, in the 1980s Péter Esterházy was the only major writer to draw inspiration from Márai. Although I regard Márai's absence from Hungarian cultural life as an irreparable loss it gives me some consolation that the writer who may well be the most important living Hungarian author carries on Márai's tradition in both a moral and an artistic sense—by making no political compromises and by dedicating himself to the Hungarian language.

Sándor Márai

Confessions of a Man of the Middle Class

(Excerpts)

There were not more than a dozen three-storied houses in our town: the house in which we lived, two barracks and a few public buildings. The army corps headquarters was built later on and that was three-storied too and it even had an electric lift. But our house, on Main Street, was like a proper city house, a true apartment house with its three stories, broad façade, spacious doorway, wide flight of stairs—it was a draughty staircase, and in the mornings the marketeers roosted on the steps in their felt waistcoats and sheepskin caps, eating bread and bacon, smoking their pipes and spitting copiously—and from every storey a long row of windows, twelve to every floor, looked onto the street. The apartments on the first floor—as ours—had narrow built-on balconies, the iron balustrades of which we festooned with geraniums in window-boxes filled with earth every summer. ("Embellish your town!" was the watchword, and there was even a society founded to hasten the realization of this noble goal, the Town Embellishment Society.) It was a very pretty, above all a stately house, the first truly "modern" house in town with its red brick façade, the architect filled the bottom of all the windows with stucco decorations and generally built in everything that the ambition of a fin de siècle architect would append onto such a brand-new apartment house.

In this town every house, even those in which several families lived and paid rent, seemed like a family dwelling. The real city was practically invisible, built inwards, spread out behind the single-storey façades of the rows of houses. Should a traveller happen to glance beyond one of the vaulted doorways, he would see four or five houses in the courtyard, added by grandchildren and great-grand-children; when a son married, a new wing was added to the existing buildings. The town hid itself in the courtyards of its houses. People lived inwards, in a jealously suspicious caution, and in time every family constructed a hidden little quarter for themselves, a tiny block of houses officially represented to the world by the street front. No wonder then that the house in which my parents rented an apartment early this century counted as a sky-scraper in this milieu—and was soon the talk of all the county. It was a genuine, doleful apartment house, the kind they were building hundreds of in the capital at the time: a tenement house with tenants, a long latticed open corridor winding along the whole length of the inner courtyard, laundries, central heating, and separate lavatories for the domestics by the service stairs. There had been

nothing like it in the city up to then. Central heating was a modern convenience, but the servants' lavatories were also much spoken of, for—out of fastidiousness, or call it a sense of delicacy—no one had ever evinced much interest as to where and when domestics relieved themselves. The "modern" architect who built our apartment house proved himself an innovator in this field by so decidedly setting apart the exigencies of gentle folk and their servants. At school I even used to brag about the servants having their own separate toilets in our house. But the truth was that the domestics, out of an odd sense of modesty and aversion, did not frequent the lavatories at all, and one could not tell where they went instead. Probably to the same places they had used earlier, for centuries, from the beginning of time.

The architect could dabble to his heart's content, he did not need to be sparing of either space or materials. The door from the stairway led into a living-room size entrance hall; a mirror-wardrobe stood here and an embroidered brush-holder and a pair of antlers were hung on the wall; this room was shiveringly cold in winter, for he had forgotten to put a radiator in it and so it was unheated, the visitors' fur coats froze crisp on the coat-stand. Strictly speaking, this room would have been the "main" entrance from the stairway, but this door was opened only to the most honoured guests. Servants, members of the family, even our parents entered the apartment from the corridor on the inner courtyard side where there was a small glass door next to the kitchen. There was not even a bell to ring, you had to knock on the kitchen window. Friends of the family, too, used this door when they came to visit. The "main entrance", the hall with the antlers, was used only two or three times a year, on my father's name-day and on carnival nights. And once, as a special favour, a birthday present, I begged my mother to be permitted, on an ordinary weekday, alone and for my own pleasure, to enter the flat through the entrance hall doorway, just the once.

The courtyard was rectangular and most uncommonly spacious. At its centre was a large stand on which carpets were beaten, like a gibbet capable of accommodating several at a time, and an electrically operated draw-well which pumped the water up into the flats. There were no water mains in the city at that time. At dawn and again at dusk the caretaker's wife appeared by the well, started the little electric motor and ran it until a thin trickle of water spurted down into the courtyard from the overflow placed beneath the eaves on the second floor, signalling that even the topmost cistern was full of drinking-water. This entrancing spectacle, especially at eventide, rallied all those tenants who did not deem it beneath their dignity to stand and gape openmouthed—mostly the children and the servants. Electric lighting was then in vogue in most of the houses in the city; electric lamps and the Auer-type gas-jets were used alternately. But paraffin lamps were also widely used still. My grandmother used a pendant-lamp that burned paraffin to her dying day, and when my parents boarded me out in the neighbouring town to the house of the village schoolmaster and organist who was to prepare me for my final examinations, I spent the year studying and playing *vingt-et-un* by the light of a paraffin lamp, though, it is true, I felt that this was an anachronistic state of affairs and it offended my dignity to have to dwell in

such a backward place. When I was a boy we still prided ourselves on having electric lighting at home but whenever we could, when there were no guests for dinner, we lit the gas-jets that glowed with a soft, mellow milky light instead. The smell of gas often pervaded the apartment. Later an ingenious man invented a kind of safety gas-lighter, a thin platinum plate which was mounted above the Auer-mantle. When there was a gas flow this thin platinum plate began to vibrate, became red-hot and automatically ignited the flow. My father appreciated technical innovations, and was one of the first in the city who had his chandeliers set up with this safety device. But we used paraffin for lighting too, especially the servants out in the kitchen, and the caretaker used a paraffin lamp to light the stairway. They marvelled at electric lighting but did not place much faith in it. The central heating apparatus, too, clanked and gurgled rather than give off heat. My mother had a glazed tile stove put in the children's schoolroom because she distrusted this steammarvel. The magic devices of the beginning of the century generally made life more difficult instead of making it easier. Inventors learned their trade at our expense. Ten years later the whole world hummed and hissed and sizzled with electricity, steam and internal combustion engines, but inventors in my childhood were still trying to improve their contraptions, and pretty often the devices these venturesome innovators laid at the door of the gullible faithful were faulty and impracticable. Electric lights flickered and shone with a pale, weak yellow light. The central heating always broke down when it was savagely cold, or flooded the rooms with an oppressive, damp, muggy heat, which is probably the reason why we so often took ill. But "keeping up with the times" was the proper thing to do. My mother's sister, for example, did not like to "keep up with the times" and burned wood in her white pottery stoves; we children often visited her, fleeing the delights of central heating, in order to get really warm, basking in the even, fragrant warmth of smouldering beech-wood.

A bitter wind continuously swept our courtyard, incessantly soughing and howling, for the courtyard was open to the north, towards the high mountains, snow-capped even in the summer, that formed a gap-toothed semi-circle around the city. The architect continued the three-storied façade with a two-storied row of buildings on both sides of the courtyard and a neat little single-storey building at the end, a "two-room family house". All this extended a long way and took up a great deal of space. The architect apparently did not put too much faith in finding tenants for all the apartments of the block and so did not build further storeys, judging them superfluous. The entire house heralded a new era—modern times: the glory of rising, striving, constructive, enterprising capitalism. This was the first house in the city which was not built with the purpose of having its tenants spend their days between its cosy, familiar walls to the end of their lives—as far as I know, not one of the tenants who rented an apartment there at the beginning of the century lives there still. It was an apartment house, with tenants. The old patrician families would have been loath to become tenants of such a house. They did in effect look down upon the immigrant, rootless inhabitants of the block.

The memory of one other summer looms over this landscape; it was one of those real summers, radiant and cloudless, such as I have never, as far as I can recall, experienced since then. We rented a summer house with a garden on the Bankó, the weeks went by in an atmosphere of solid physical well-being; I do not remember a single misunderstanding or quarrel during those summer weeks.

The boarding-school year was behind me, and my absence had gained me several pleasant privileges. We arrived at an unexpressed agreement that the unwritten laws of the family were to bind me no longer, that I could go my own way and that in the future we would tolerate each other's caprices with polite forbearance. I must have been a clumsy, gangling adolescent that summer, all arms and legs; the children no longer admitted me into their secret world and the adults did not yet permit me to approach them; I idled between the two banks as it were, in that vertiginous, highly sensitive, state in which the spirit intercepts and transmits the slightest sounds of life somehow amplified, intensified. The summer house stood at the edge of the pine wood, high above the city, in uncleared woodland; there were perhaps half a dozen such villas on the edges of the forest, and further on, during this month the dilapidated rest-house in front of the Louise-spring was also full to overflowing with vacationers. In the villas we of course lived in seclusion, reservedly keeping very much to ourselves. A sweet smelling garden resplendent with country flowers spread out in front of the open porch; on the lawns the ladies from the neighbouring villas lay in deckchairs doing needlework all day long; after tea the gentlemen sat over their wine on the verandah; a hackney-cab brought out the husbands from their offices in the city at dusk; a town councillor lived next door; here the Deputy Lord Lieutenant, a bearded, broad-shouldered Hungarian gentleman, all dignified gestures, looking like a character out of one of Jókai's books, took lodgings for the summer months; here one of the judges of the Court of Appeals enjoyed the cool and the shade with his wife and family and finicky sister-in-law, a soft, pliant, creamy-skinned, beautiful young woman with a divorce pending. The ladies did needlework, and read *The Count of Monte Cristo;* it was about that time that the famous novel first appeared in Hungarian, in instalments... The warm, resinous smell of the pine forest pervaded everywhere. We lived like the heroes of one of the scarlet-bound volumes of the Universal Novel Library: beside the pale-green instalments of Monte Cristo it was these red, cloth-bound books that lay in the ladies' work-baskets. A young lawyer from Budapest paid court to the belle about to be divorced, and the vacationing ladies fervently encouraged the hatching alliance. It was a singularly warm, sweltering summer. At the setting of the sun we went mushrooming in the forest.

The forest was living its last days; some weeks later a storm tore it up by the roots all the way down the mountainside as far as Sawmill Valley. For weeks on end I would betake myself to the forest every morning to rove it hungrily, as if I were aware of its fate and wanted to gather memories that would last me a lifetime. The drought had parched the glades a pale yellow but in the thick of the forest the trees subsisted on some mysterious source of moisture; it was cool and

shady there with that enticing, musty pinewood smell, a whiff of which even today suffices to bring back the stifling, exciting fragrance of the chaotic atmosphere of my childhood. In the forest I sometimes came upon the misanthropic lawyer who would not "endorse a bill", he walked tirelessly, a cyanide bottle in his pocket and a butterfly net in his hand in search of white-winged cabbage butterflies. In the middle of the forest, in the languid silence, you could hear the buzz of the sawmill in the valley miles away. I spent days sprawled out on the grass, sometimes I took a book but read little; I ate and drank of the almost tangible substance that the forest provided instead, that distillation of scent, light and sound that is still to this day the formula of "nature" for me; a decade has passed and I have not been able to extricate myself from among the stones, but I may well have these weeks to thank for the fact that later, in the literary cafés of foreign cities, ties of affinity—bashful ties, it is true—have always bound me to this experience, which I was never able to disown. "Nature" was never a scholastic, highbrow event for me, but a genuine concern; secretly I was deeply attached to this experience, even much later, when I found its manifestations slightly suspicious, banal and especially "anti-literary". Yes, this was the "great summer" in the forest... And it did not rain for weeks. On the afternoon of June 29th, the Feast of St Peter and Paul, the holiday-makers' idyll was suffused by a flutter of excitement: according to my mother and the other expert-eyed ladies, every sign pointed towards the approach of the happy moment. It was a certainty that this afternoon the smart young lawyer from Budapest would declare himself and propose to the mellow-sweet belle of our city, disappointed in her previous marriage.

The table for afternoon tea was laid on our porch, with a little more ceremony than was customary. The atmosphere was one of festive joy. The suitor had brought fireworks in his luggage from Budapest; the gentlemen had hired a Gypsy band for the evening from the city; the tart wine and soda water had been cooling in water-butts since lunchtime. We all dressed up for afternoon tea; I did not want to be a spoil-sport and put on my school uniform parade jacket. It pleased me to have our villa selected to be the scene of such a solemn event; even the Deputy Lord Lieutenant, this grand seigneur, would be having tea with us... and if he chances to be in the right mood, he may even play the violin for us. This afternoon, the afternoon of the betrothal, promised to be such a bounteous, ceremonious feast, a feast of the middle class, with a background of the ripe peace of summer... My father sat leisurely smoking his cigar, leaning against the porch railing in his braided house-coat, deep in conversation with the Deputy Lord Lieutenant. High up beside the brook, in the restaurant of the inn, a Gypsy band was playing for the beer-drinking day-trippers. My mother set the table with her Meissen, the onion-figured service, and her Karlsbad glassware. A large milk-loaf stood on the table, cream in small jugs, raspberries on green leaves, butter and honey in crystal dishes.

We were sitting down to tea when the Deputy Lord Lieutenant was called away into the garden. A county messenger was standing there, stiffly at attention, and handed him a letter.

He tore open the envelope, came back onto the porch, stopped on the threshold and was silent. He was very pale; he sported a black Kossuth fringe of a beard and within this black mourning border his now anxious face gleamed deathly pale.

"What's the matter, Endre?" asked my father.

"They've killed the heir to the throne," the Deputy Lord Lientenant said and made a nervous, discouraged gesture.

In the great silence the Gypsy band sounded as close and loud as if it were there in the garden beside us. Those present sat around the table stilled and motionless with their porcelain onion-figured tea-cups in their hands, as though frozen in a deadlock, as in a dumb-show. I followed my father's gaze; he stared with hesitant, irresolute eyes at the sky.

The sky was pale blue, a washed-out summer-blue. There was not even a fleecy cloud floating upon it.

Land, Land!...

(Excerpt)

I wanted to understand the kind of control these people were subjected to. Despite the harsh, confused and dangerous situation I held by my decision to examine the Soviet system without preconception and prejudice. Naturally the standard military hierarchy and subordination was tangibly and perceptibly manifest: the crew of technicians had a superior, a warrant officer who lived with his men—but, they slept on the bare floor and he had a bed made up for him by the wall. It was he who woke the men at five o'clock in the morning, distributed incoming mail, and generally supervised the work done during the day. His name was Sedlachek and he hated Hungarians—he said his mother was Hungarian—and he was an uncommonly aggressive, brutish, and stupid man. This Sedlachek carried with him throughout his wartime wanderings a striking-clock the size of a child—heaven knows how he came by it, along the way—and this he guarded jealously; the clock stood by his bed on the book-shelf, and the Russian wound it up tenderly every morning and listened proudly as it struck the hours. Naturally the clock told Moscow time—two hours ahead of ours—and struck according to this different Russian time.

Just as they brought Russian time with them, they also brought Cyrillic script, all that "difference", that mysterious alienness that a Westerner can never understand and which even this forced, very intimate coexistence could not relieve. For weeks we lived with these thirty people like animals in some kind of pen. We ate from the same bucket, slept on the same straw, washed their clothes, cooked their food, assisted them in their work; yet I never for a single moment felt that we could relate to them in any way. Situations that bring people closer together were not wanting: war, destitution, shared hardships made us dependent on each other, victors and vanquished alike. I cannot say that these people—and the others who hung about our house during the weeks of the

siege—were, without exception, particularly evil-minded or inhuman. There were some villains baser than animals among them, but I met well-intentioned, kindly men too and at times recognized compassion in their eyes and words. It was only that strangeness, that sense of otherness that no kind of intimate situation or circumstance could ever resolve.

And when I came to know them a little better: their tastes, desires, the way in which they jealously guarded, from one another snarling like dogs, the worthless, miserable spoils they could call their own: a pair of shoes, a toy they wanted to take home to their children, a broken thermometer, everything that was an "object", tangible. Little by little I came to understand that the deeper, the truest motive behind general, incessant Russian plundering was not rage against the "fascist" enemy but simply abject poverty. The communist Russian, in peace as in war, in his civilian life, was so poor, so wretchedly destitute that he really had nothing to call his own. The revolution and the communist autocracy had despoiled him of everything necessary to make life more colourful, more human —and so, when, after thirty years of privation and drudgery, they were at last set at liberty into the world, they pounced avidly on everything they could lay their hands on. Over the last two decades, the same motive could be discerned as a driving force behind the Bolsheviks in international politics: the fear that internal unrest and social discontent could only be counteracted by forcible means, and destitution and want, which compelled them to make concessions that would be followed by requisitioning all the more base and shameless. Western *Schöngeists* who in utopian daydreams described the communists' cynical, rapacious and inhuman strategies as "temporary faults generally only woke up from their woolgathering when the communist system grabbed them by the throat. (Sometimes not even then.) As the members of my *masiorskaya* pounced upon shoes, clothes, toys and alcohol, so did the Soviet Union pounce upon the possessions of the conquered countries, and so will it one day pounce upon the penury of the Far-East to extort, if there is nothing else to be had, then forced labour in the form of socage—and so will it one day pounce upon Western Europe, if it can find the means to do so, if the "liberal", "bridge-building", "coexistentialist" intellectuals of the West have prepared the ground and conditions for them. I am increasingly disposed to believe that it is not "class struggle" that is the true promoter of this strife, but Eastern destitution and want—and only then the coterie of the New Class as sung by Djilas and others.

I lived among them in those weeks, watched them and tried to understand the human and military structure of this Soviet detail. Sedlachek's direct superiors were the officers of the bridge-building detachment; they would drop in to check on us day and night, supervised our work, rebuked and advised, were noticeably well educated. They lived apart, in villas, ate separately and had batmen to attend to them. But the crew of technicians did not take much notice of these professional engineers, officers though they were. They talked back at them and visibly did not recognize them as their true superiors, with full power over them. They behaved differently when a field officer arrived on a tour of inspection; at such

times we, the members of the household, were turned out into the garden, the crew of technicians lined up in a regular half-circle, Sedlachek saluted stiffly and reported, and the high-ranking officer, dressed Western fashion, in a leather coat, with gold epaulettes and very white hands, listened to his report and reviewed the unit. This higher military command, from the point of view of deportment, authority and precedence, corresponded to the similar hierarchy of Western armies.

But the field officer left, Sedlachek remained, and I came to learn that real power and supreme authority were not in the hands of field officers. I never learned who the political officer was among them and did not know which of them kept the political officer under surveillance... But you could tell that these dangerous men of power were always there among us. Sometimes a fur-capped, well-dressed young GPU officer came to visit. He was effeminately pretty-faced, smelled faintly of eau-de-cologne and had soft, white hands; a spoiled dandy, like the Lenskys and Onegins of the great Russian poem... This man taught physiotherapy and eurythmics in Moscow in peacetime. My Kirghizes trembled before him. He was the local provost marshal and was in command of the secret police accompanying the forces, and thus held master over life and death. When he walked into the room or one of the workshops, the cursing, bawling, lustily singing men fell silent, no one looked at him, all began to work with downcast eyes and bowed heads...

One night one of the light-fingered young men found in the attic the Lucky Strike tin we kept the remains of our money in. The theft was discovered at the time the perfumed GPU officer arrived on his tour of inspection. He noted our aggrieved expressions and asked what the trouble was... He was a little surprised upon hearing the answer and stared at us uncomprehendingly, as though he could not understand what was so extraordinary in that his men, Soviet soldiers, could not keep their fingers off anything that lay conveniently to hand... Then he shrugged his shoulders and offered to interrogate his soldiers, assuring us that in a couple of hours the culprit—if not the money—would surely be found. I talked him out of the "interrogation", did not want to make personal enemies out of any of the soldiers. He told me haughtily that he did not understand this squeamishness and went away regretfully, like someone who would willingly have given an illustration of his Eastern interrogation procedures to us, bungling Westerners... When he walked out of the room we all felt relieved; the thief who was presumably still lurking in the house and we the aggrieved parties alike... I recognized the Lucky Strike tin in the hands of the village notary, previously an Arrowcross man, now dancing attendance on the Russians with bustling readiness; one of our Russian room-mates gave it to him in return for services rendered, as payment for getting him a woman.

An Oriental with delicate features and hands that were as nimble and light as a monkey's, cleaned, washed, swept and washed up for the technicians' crew: an Uzbek named Hassan. He was from Tashkent, slant-eyed and yellow-skinned; he was always cold in our rigorous winter, did not speak much and did not like the Russians who despised him and spoke to him derisively. "You am not

Russian", a good-natured fat youth, Feodor, the kitchen boy, sometimes said to tease him, "You am Chitai..." (Chinese.) And Hassan would growl crossly like a dog being taunted. The Russians had several other ways of emphasizing that they were the superior race.

There was a Jew among the technicians, called Andrei: a young man born and brought up in the Soviet Union, in the Jewish republic there. He ostentatiously steered clear of the Russians. He made up a bed for himself in the kitchen, ate alone, and in the mornings put on the appurtenances necessary for prayer and, turning his face to the wall, would pray for a long time.

There was a Siberian, an aristocrat of a kind, grey-eyed, ash blond, a proud and lonely man, who scorned everyone, the White Russians and the Ukrainians alike. He lived with the stately and careless arrogance of a hunter-fisherman versed in the ancient trades and accustomed to Nature among the grimy technicians, and these men respected his constitutional excellence, conceding that he was better, superior to the rest. This Siberian communicated with Hassan the Uzbek as a huntsman communicates with his dog; he would whistle after him and the little Asian, who otherwise shunned his fellow creatures, rushed to do him service. When Hassan heard about the theft he hurried up to the attic, took a look around and after a while slunk down the stairs with the crestfallen expression of a cheated child: thus he showed us, with a commiserative gesture, that the thief had taken everything and that he, Hassan, had been left out of his share of the booty. I made friends with this Uzbek: he spoke to me at length of Tashkent, where it was always warm, where they have electric lighting, and hot water gushes up out of the earth, and the natives stroll around in many-hued kaftans. When I assured him that not long ago we too lived thus in nearby Budapest— except that we did not wear kaftans—he listened to me with eyes blinking in suspicion. He obviously did not believe me: in this Uzbek, as in many of his companions, Russians and Chuwash alike, there glimmered that *complexe de superiorité* that Gide experienced during his tour of Russia. He was a peculiar little Asian, with refined manners, and cleanly enough in his own way: I once saw him washing up the dishes in the kitchen and then, in the same water, fastidiously wash his hair.

Translated by Eszter Molnár

George Szirtes

István Vas: Face, Clothes, Voice

For Piroska Szántó

I knew he was ill. I never knew him when he was well, but there was nothing of the invalid about him. I remember first meeting his wise, humorous face in 1984, at the house of the then British Council representative, Keith Dobson. I had read some of my poems to an invited audience and he talked to me afterwards. Although the aged face had grown a little reptilean the expression was very human. His eyes were lively, alert and warm. There was neither wariness nor confrontation in them, rather a brief ironic glow. His manner was courteous but gently elusive. An approachable man, I thought, with many secrets. A chess-player. The clever favourite uncle with presents for the children. No one knows what he does or thinks, but one trusts him.

At that stage I knew nothing about him, apart from his name, but I was wholly ignorant of Hungarian writing in any case. All I knew was that I liked his face. I recognized a distant reflection of my own in it. I wondered if mine might look something like his when I was older. It would be good to think so.

Over the next few years I met him occasionally at the house in Szentendre. The present editor of the *NHQ*—to whom I owe many of my early introductions and friendships—drove myself and wife Clarissa out there, and we spent a friendly disorientating evening among other visitors.

I don't suppose we learned any secrets then, though everything I heard struck me as a secret—whether it was history, literary politics, or simply something I hadn't previously known about myself or where I come from. And I read the poems, or rather pecked at them, because it took me a few years before I could read Hungarian poetry as poetry. So it went on till 1989, when I was asked to translate a number of his poems for a book that was to be ready by October, in time for the Hungarian festival at the Barbican in London.

This entailed a number of consultations in his Budapest flat, across the bridge, and up the dark and shabby staircase to the book-and-painting-lined rooms. I found the work a pleasure: after the brief initial period of adjustment, of wriggling into someone else's costume, the movements and gestures came with a certain ease. The costume wasn't some kind of fancy dress: there were no vatic

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George Szirtes's *latest volume of poems,* Bridge Passages, *was published by Oxford University Press in 1991. See also his essays, book reviews and translations from Hungarian poetry in recent issues of* NHQ.

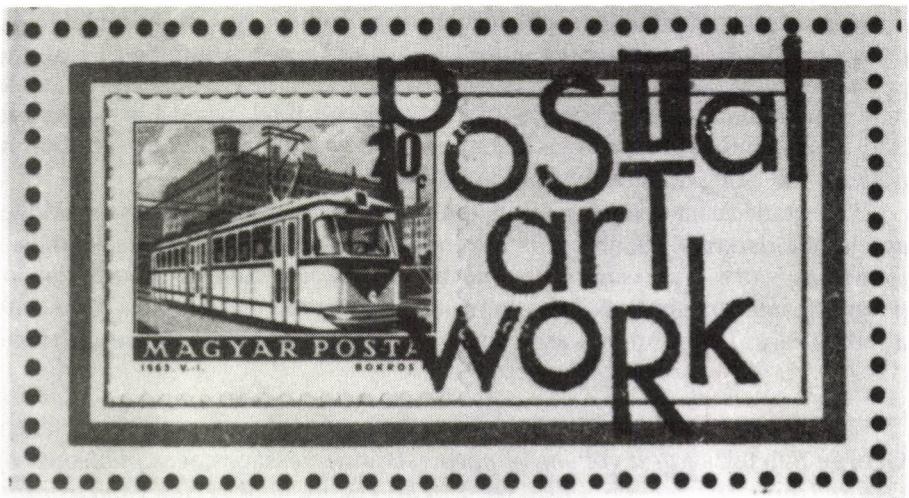
robes, no high aesthetic frills, no red noses, no *gatya*. There was an urbane formality to its cut, but no starch at all. It was generous, comfortable without being plain or anonymous. I tried to listen very hard to the voice within it and return the echo. The visits were rewarding and we made rapid progress. At the same time I began to read the volumes of his autobiography. These were historically fascinating and beautifully written, full of sharp portraits and clear narratives, but in some sense the man remained as mysterious as ever. Some part of his life would be kept to himself: indeed, this was part of his wisdom.

Most tributes are betrayals of some sort. No doubt this is too. The last two or three years have been very bad for Hungarian poetry: Weöres, Nemes Nagy and now Vas have gone. A whole world has gone, or is going, with them. Three such different poets: a protean elf or daemon, a vast fierce mountain, and a man, almost more man than poet, but a poet precisely because of that. Some idiots will ask: what do you mean "a man"? Surely all of us are men and women? These are not worth answering here. I know that even the face of a man may be a mask of sorts, but I trusted his face, and I trust him when he says in a poem called *"Nem a vers"*:

Nem kell költőnek lennem mindenáron.
Tudnék, s már nincs kedvem dalolni. Mert
Az ember a fontosabb, nem a vers.

I need not be a poet at any price.
Could sing, but I don't care to now. Because
The man is more important than the verse.

This is, of course, a poem. His eyes were ironic, knowledgeable, full of what I thought of as history, but much nicer.



György Galántai, Hungary

András Petőcz

Poems

Translated by Jascha Kessler

Europe, Metaphorically

Európa metaforája

1

She twirls herself, turns round, twirls once more,
posing, smiling, laughing, beckoning airily,
drifts off, only to turn back beckoning, offering,
repulsing, coolly firm, and then turns away,
so that you think, well, it's hopeless, when she glances back,
lightly, sidelong, her eyes opening, pupils wide,
and wider yet, and she's laughing at you, at you alone,
laughing gaily, and you freeze, astonished,
your throat constricting, as she hovers lovely
and out of reach, out of reach and lovely,
smiling at you, her head inclined aside,
her hair brushing one cheek, there she is and yet not,
unbelievable and simply gorgeous, and your heart tightens
as she stands there so lovely, and out of reach.

2

Sometimes she feels like sleeping in, curled up,
burrowing into her pillow, sniffling, scrabbling,
fussing, ignoring your presence, lost beneath the quilt,
"Lights out!" you say, and she just smirks, and
squeals as you make your move, then laughs out loud,
clowning around, making fun of you, acting silly,
you think you're getting sore, but you don't quite make it,
you're laughing too, while the time slips by, though
you never notice time slipping by, as she graciously, and oh
so generously lets you take her little mitt in yours,

András Petőcz, *author of several volumes of poems, was awarded the 1990 Robert Graves Prize for Best Hungarian Poem of the Year for "Europe, Metaphorically".*

how light it is, you say, as light as she herself,
you say, and you move so lighty that
it's as though you're flying, yes you're so light,
light as a body sighing: solid, yet light as air.

3

Perhaps you're running, even sprinting.
Surprised, you watch yourself in motion.
You're dashing over a new meadow, perhaps
running among bushes, past thickets, sprinting
exhilareted, panting, gasping, stopping for strength,
and yet moving ahead again, winded,
discouraged, clenching your fists in despair
you start off again, tumble over
a bluff, grinding your teeth, chagrined
at your own demise. You slow down. You take
a deep breath, recalling how you ran,
how hard you fell in your thoughts,
and you smile. Your lungs are full of fresh air,
you're safe now, infinitely calm, infinitely at peace.

A Banal Poem, Subject: Love

Banális vers a szerelemről

Those we loved, they're dead.
Faces behind hands, shy
Shawls dropped, modestly awry.
Those we love, they're married.

Those we loved are busy in the kitchen.
Darkling hair heavy as a cross of flowers,
yet weightless. On you their gaze lowers.
Those we loved are bearing children.

(I wait for you in silence, without pain.
My back to the border, on a clattering train.
You caress your hands with mine.)

(You put my lips to yours. Kiss your lips with mine.
Remonstrations asleep, songs asleep too.
Those we loved, they're dead too.)

The Lake at Down

Hajnali tó

Vast water: the silence of dawn.
Celestial blue: silence, dawn's
vast water. Vast, celestial, blue
silence, dawn's vast water.

Velvety swells. Silent,
rippling tremors, silence,
vast water, celestial blue,
velvety rippling trem-

ors, haze, thickening swells,
vast water, blue, rippling, vel-
vety stirrings, celestial,

blue silence, swelling vel-
vety stirrings, ripp-
ling, dawn blue, celestial.

Escape Through a Strange Land

Futásom idegen tájban

Behind me, coming in relays: an appalled silence.
Can't shake them. Implacable pursuit. Behind me
an appalled silence. Implacable in pursuit:
an appalled silence and a stillness. Implacably
coming on behind me, pursuing me, an appalled
silence, a stillness, implacably coming on, still
and silent: behind me, in relays.

Their feet soundlessly pounding: dreamlike.
Dreamlike: an appalling silence, a stillness.
Feet coming after me, in relays,
soundless panting, and pounding feet.
Visible as blurry forms: I can make out
their blurry forms, their blurry forms visible.
Visible, when I glance back behind me.

I fled through a sort of forest. A sort
of forest through which I fled till now, a sort of forest
till now, through dunes now. Surrounded
by a waste of sand now, in twilight, I can make out
their hazy forms when I glance back, twilight, and
darkening everywhere. Mostly just darkening. Just
darkening, mostly just a leaden darkening.

They pant silently. A silent panting, but
I know, I can sense their wheezing. As
if it's my dream. That silent wheezing,
but I *know* that panting of theirs. *I'm*
wheezing: Silence. Stillness. A shocked
silence. Gaining. My hunters gain on me.
Barren sands all around. No, just that grayness.

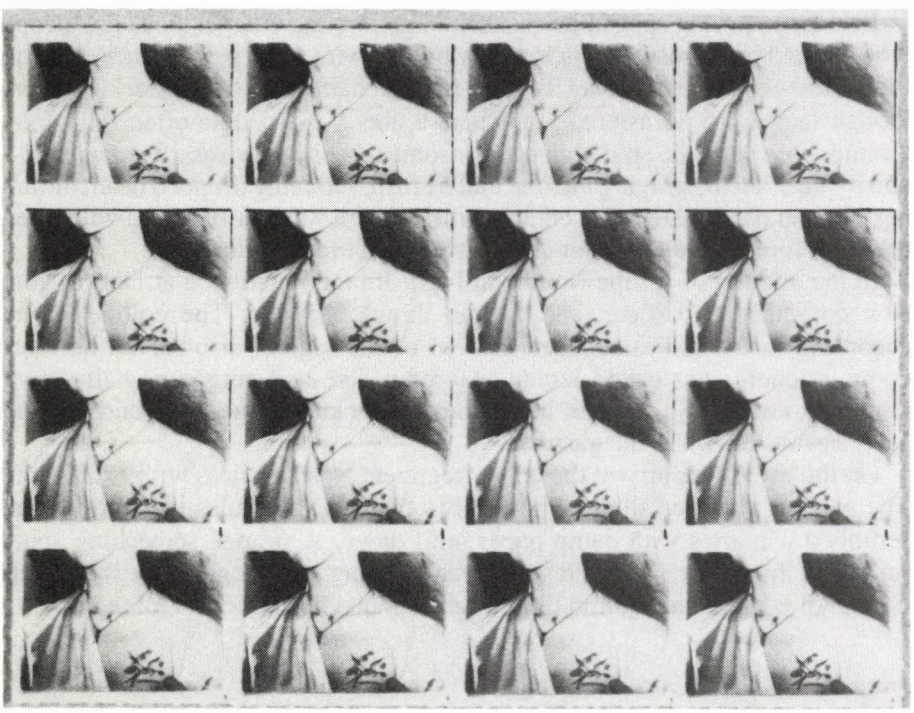
As if I'm dreaming. No, just grayness all around,
or no, just silence. A twilight silence. I can
almost hear them panting, they're here yet
I can't hear them. *A shooting match.* They mouth
those words behind me, but I *know* what they say.
A shooting match. I'm thrown off-stride, I'm stiff, jerky,
cramping, all cramp and spasm, I can't

let my hunters gain on me. I'm fading.
I can't let my hunters gain on me, I tell
myself, but I know they're gaining, gaining on me
steadily, their silhouettes behind me clearer and
clearer, I can almost hear them pant, though
I'm muffled in silence, wrapped in stillness.
I can almost hear their panting, I tell myself,

almost hear, with their guns cocked and aimed, as if
I'm dreaming, as if it's all a stupid, senseless
apparition, a dream dreaming, my hunters behind
me. I run on, pressing, pressing and
wheezing, surrounded by shocked silence,
by a stillness in which I still hear them, my hunters, nearer always
nearer, a marathon run, endless, senseless

a strange run, I hear those hunters and
can't guess how long it will go on, or when I can rest,
or it will ever end? can't even guess when it will
end, if ever, my escape through this weird landscape,
this waste of sand, twilight gray and dim as dusk,

this drear mirage, silent and senseless, as if
I'm dreaming. I run in senseless silence
through a waste of sand and along forest trails, through vast
meadows, as if I dream this as-if world.
This flight through myself never ends,
an impossible endurance, silent
still, surrounded by formless grayness. Formless grayness all around me,
grotesque forms and ghastly shapes, behind me
those blurry shapes of grotesque, ghastly forms.



Andrej Tisma, Yugoslavia

Ádám Bodor

Epidemic in Dobrin

(Short story)

The two Petrika Hamzas who impaled themselves in the autumn of '81 worked in the Dobrin nature reserve, in Doc Oleinek's bear garden. They were seen in the village a few days before the event—all the forest rangers got special leave on revolution day—they spent the afternoon standing around in front of the knife-throwers' booth, where the showmen were camped on the banks of the Sinistra, watching the gleaming blades swishing and thudding. The public watched them instead: no one had ever seen two so much alike, blue-skinned, red-eyed, near-white fair-haired young men. They were albino twins and were so identical that the thick bear-keepers' outfit they wore crumpled in the same places on them, the clouds of vapour streaming from their nostrils showed that they even breathed together, and to top it all, according to the tin identity tags hanging from their necks, they were both called Petrika Hamza.

Besides requiring special permission to go into the village, those few people who worked in the reserve, enclosed by barbed wire and a picket fence, all wore their names engraved on a tag hanging from a chain around their neck. Winters, though they were occasionally inoculated, the woodspeople often fell sick—around those parts the epidemic was for some reason known as a Tungus cold—and if one of them, straying into the underbrush, suddenly dropped dead, the dog tag came in handy later. The banks of the Sinistra were skirted by a wilderness of virgin forests; they did not always find the corpse in time.

In the autumn of '81 the Mountain Light Infantry stationed at Dobrin got a new commanding officer, and certain things changed. The colonel—who, according to the old-established custom of the region, also served as forest commissioner—was called Izolda Mavrodin. She had only gone half-way to Dobrin from Dobrudza when her name, her nickname the Sow, and thus her sex, became known at the garrison.

On the eve of her arrival the whole regiment was sleepless with excitement. The soldiers polished floors with pillows bound to the soles of their feet and scrubbed windows with damp paper until dawn. A strange screeching sound settled on the valley, as if wild geese were moving south high above the clouds, though of course that autumn their migration had been over for a long time.

Ádám Bodor *is a Transylvanian writer of fiction who now lives in Hungary. His collection of short stories,* The Euphrates at Babylon, *was published by Polygon in 1991.*

The barracks were due for a thorough clean-up in any case: everything had to be spick-and-span for when Colonel Puiu Borcan would be lying in state. The former forest commissioner had dropped dead in the course of his regular daily inspection of the reserve, near the bear garden where the twins worked. He lay like a badger on the windswept mountain-top, and by the time his soldiers found him, days later, on the ruddy carpet of blackberries among green stones covered with lichen, a bird had nested in his gaping mouth. Probably a waxwing.

This foreign bird that wintered in the home valleys was not liked by those living in the mountains. They disliked strangers around these parts, strange birds included, and they decided it was the waxwings that had brought the Tungus cold from the north. They chased it off with stones, and those who kept their eyes skinned simply spat at them. And now it seemeed that here was evidence at last, for there can be no omen more sinister than a colonel, even a colonel, struck down by disease.

There was only one surgery in the highland district of Dobrin. Its courtyard teemed with timbermen, road-menders, mushroom-gatherers, and other forest people, and, of course, the bear-keepers were there too. They were all demanding their shots, for up to then all those who worked in the woods had been inoculated every autumn. Now they had been waiting for four or five days, crowding the porch steps, filling the courtyard, and, though there was nothing wrong with them as yet, they huddled unhappily at the foot of the fence scrawled all over with red crosses, getting paler by the minute. The paramedics kept peeping out at them from behind the gauze curtains; from time to time, one of them would step out onto the porch: in a stained, ragged white coat, faded green military trousers underneath, sandals on bare feet, griffon-claws black with dirt—and bid those waiting to be patient: the official time for the inoculations had not yet arrived. In the meanwhile, however, it was getting towards the end of autumn; even in the bright midmorning sunlight, silvery clouds of breath floated above the courtyard.

On the fourth or fifth day, towards evening, the grey ganders arrived with the gloomy shades of dusk and sent everyone home. The grey ganders were local villagers dressed up in city clothes, hand-picked by the Sow Mavrodin on the day of her arrival, she alone knew for what purpose—long-necked, button-eyed figures, their skins a little shiny, wisps of cobwebby hair around their ears, their faces unlined. With their look-alike, vacantly neutral appearance there was something goose-like about them at all events.

The grey ganders now proclaimed that there would be no epidemic that winter, therefore there would be no need for shots, so would everyone please go home quietly. After they had coaxed the medics out of the surgery, they carried the boxes of medicine out into the courtyard and then trampled on them. The phials crunched under their feet and the bitter smell of the serum curled around the fences and was caught between the plum-trees and the hayricks, mingling with the smell of wet leaves.

This was good news; the forest rangers and other unsociables of the same ilk dispersed and set off for home on tiptoe, a little muddled with joy and relief; they

had not been home for days. In the falling night the sound of their rubber-booted or moccasined feet rustling along the dew-drenched paths could be heard for a long time.

There was no reason to wait so I too began to walk along the main street plunged in darkness, at the end of which the lights of the railway station glimmered faintly. At that time I was working beyond the embankment, at the fruit depot in the forest and lived there too, by myself, in the old building, in a sheltered nook along one of the corridors, among rotting crates and musky barrels.

I had not got far from the surgery when I met Doc Oleinek and one of the Petrika Hamzas. I recognized my drinking pal first, loping in front of me. Naturally by his smell. He did not in the least smell of medicine, Doc was just a nickname; he had always tended bears. There was a strong, nauseating, wild animal scent about him—like a bush on the edge of the forest that had been pissed upon. They kept about sixty or seventy, or perhaps a hundred and sixty or a hundred and seventy bears up at the Dobrin reserve, in an abandoned chapel surrounded by a paddock. My drinking pal, the head bear keeper, and the albino twins tended them.

Doc Oleinek asked me to have a drink with him and as we plodded along the dark, sodden, silent path I suddenly noticed the silky fair hair of one of the Petrika Hamzas glisten nearby. He was with the Doc, of course, but, like a lap-dog, followed him at a respectful distance, sidling around him in circles. The other Petrika Hamza must have stayed in the woods with the bears. A narrow-gauge railway on which fodder was taken to the bears, led into the reserve and until the first snows those few people who worked there used a trolley to get into the village. These two were probably on their way back.

At the station, between the purple lights of the points, the dew-drenched tracks glistened with a magnetic sheen. A hurricane lamp hung on the ramp of the loading platform, beneath it tottering figures waited. The mixed freight and passenger train from Sinistra arrived in the evening on the branch line, two thirdclass carriages and a freight car. Once a week, on Sunday evening, the freight car brought a supply of methylated spirits, some of it was distributed on the spot. Among those entitled, of course. Doc dug out the coupons, slipped them into Petrika Hamza's hand, and sent him off to queue, to get both their portions when the train came in.

Methylated spirits—sipped through bread, spongy mushrooms or mashed blackberries—is the favourite tipple of the woodlanders. If there are no blackberries handy or spongy wild mushrooms, a puttee will do just as well. Or a handful of earth.

The tracks of the narrow-gauge railway began at the far end of the railway station, skirting the fence of the lumber yard and mounting slowly out of the village towards the reserve. The stakes of the paling had recently been resharpened so as to make the constant thieving more difficult, and they now gleamed like honey in the fine mizzle of distant lights, cast against the sky. Beneath them stood the trolley tied to the bollard marking the end of the line. We set down upon it, Doc Oleinek and I, and watched for the night train; its clattering could already

be heard on distant bridges, its whistles soared high in the stillness enclosed by the sheer rocky walls of the Vale Sinistra.

"This lot have postponed the epidemic", said the Doc.

"They can, if they want to."

"Do you really believe that?"

"Why not."

If I didn't feel like talking to somebody, there was not much they could do about it. Though what I was really in the mood for was to pump the Doc about how things were up at the reserve. It was where my foster son was domiciled and not by choice. I had not seen him for almost five years. It was because of him that I accepted any kind of work in the mountain district, thinking I'd run across him sooner or later and we'd think up something together, make a run for it perhaps. I was wary of friendly chats, afraid of giving myself away somehow.

The Doc, too, preferred to swathe himself in his bear smell and did not force conversation either; as drinking pals we were of the closemouthed kind. Every once in a while we exchanged a couple of casual, pointless remarks but usually all we did was to clear our throats. But when we heard Petrika Hamza approaching with the clinking bottles in his shoulder bag, the head bear keeper jumped up at once and hurried to meet him.

"Alright then—listen," he said softly, in a husky, yet almost warm tone of voice, "You're free to go. You can be off right now."

"You're joking, Doc."

"Not in the least. We'll end up catching something from one another. You heard with your own two ears, they aren't giving us shots anymore. Better go our separate ways."

"Not a step without you. My brother and me, we want to stay with you for ever. If you're afraid of us, we'll lay low for a while, promise not to touch you. Wait until you've got over this."

"It's no good, I've made up my mind. But I promise I won't notify the grey ganders until you've got a good start on them."

And Doc Oleinek, to indicate his inexorability, took one of the bottles, which must have been Petrika Hamza's share, from the shoulder bag and placed it on the ground in front of him. He turned and sat back down again beside me on the trolley and called to him: "Drink your fill and scram. In the morning, when you're over the hill, I'll notify the authorities."

Petrika Hamza must have seen this side of Doc Oleinek before, for he did not try to argue any further. I think I saw him sit down on the embankment and start taking gulps. The Doc, too, popped the tin cap off our bottle and we began to drink. That night we had no mushrooms or blackberries at hand, so we strained the alcohol through the cuff of our jackets.

A damp, tarry purple silence descended on the valley; in the depths of it, among the stacked planks, an owl would hoot now and then, dogs barked on the homesteads and later you could hear the train, two carriages and the freight car, moving out of the station down the sloping tracks towards Sinistra. In the dark

Petrika Hamza's blubbering could also be heard off and on. He sniffled and snorted fitfully like an aggrieved, finicky puppy. Albinos are nervy, I thought, prone to lose their heads.

"Does my smell bother you?" asked Doc Oleinek tactfully, just to break the silence. "Admit it, I stink a bit."

"Not in the least."

"Because there have been a couple of silly incidents."

"There is nothing wrong with the way you smell."

"Who are you kidding? The fair sex keep giving me the brush-off. And they tell me, straight to my face they told me, it's because of the way I smell. Not that it worried me, mind. Then they landed those twins on me."

"Twins are alright in many ways."

"As you say. Twins are delicious. The three of us gave great pleasure to each other, lived together like one happy little family. Until today. But now it's over. Health comes before everything." He stood up from the trolley and called to Petrika Hamza in a voice that sounded almost relieved: "Hey there! Listen, you! There's such a thing as good manners in the world. Be so kind as to say goodbye before you go, won't you!"

But in the darkness, from where Petrika Hamza's childlike sobs had come, there was only the shuffling sound of pebbles rolling down the embankment. An impenetrable blackness floated in the place where the bear-keeper had sat, you could feel that there was nobody within, that it was completely empty.

Doc Oleinek took a walk around, searching the area, full of rubbish, rank grass and dry stalks by swinging his legs in wide arcs. On his way he kicked over an empty bottle, and finally returned with a pair of rubber boots.

"They're his," he muttered, after having sniffed into them several times, "I recognize them. But what can have got into him that he took them off? Where the fuck could he have gone barefooted?"

Then he sat back down on the trolley and we continued sipping methylated spirits through the cuff of our jackets. After a while the Doc leaned back in a more comfortable position and I too stretched out on the wooden seat. I think we noticed the flare of a match, then the red glow of a cigarette over the top of the fence pretty much at the same time. Like a cloud of heavenly mist, the shadow of Petrika Hamza was cast upon the sky among the stars. He had camped himself up there, and was smoking on top of the fence.

"You hid yourself real well, I must say," Doc Oleinek called up to him. "We were getting really worried about you. My friend here even got a bit miffed at your leaving without even saying goodbye." And, as Petrika Hamza did not reply, he added angrily: "Might I ask why you didn't offer us one of those fags you've got stashed away?"

All Petrika Hamza had to say to that was, "Because."

It sounded like a splash. Like when a fob-watch falls into the brook, say. Soon the cigarette, too, fell from his hand and glowed winking among the weeds like a firefly.

"Hm."

Doc Oleinek got up and found the butt. He put it in a holder and we calmly and peacefully smoked it to the last shred.

"These bloody twins," the Doc said. "They always screw things up when they're not together."

But he must have found it peculiar all the same, for, sitting on the edge of the trolley, he kept calling up to Petrika Hamza. As he got no more replies, he put the rubber boots beside me on the seat and strolled over to the paling. He walked up and down before it, and finally caught hold of a stake and shook it irritably.

"Hey!"

When he let go of it a little later, his fingers came away with a soft smack as though they were sticky with glue. Fresh blood makes that kind of sound.

He sat back on the trolley, snorted angrily—phew!—spat in front of him, and wiped his palm on the planks of the seat. Throwing caution to the winds he took a couple of swigs straight from the bottle, then held it out to me.

"Take a quick belt of this," he whispered, "then I'd say we'd better make a move. I think the boy's impaled himself."

"What the hell does that mean?"

"What do you think it means? He found the hole in his backside, fitted the stake in it and sat down hard."

"I don't believe it."

"Believe it or not, let's get going."

The Doc untied the chain that bound the trolley to the bollard, released the brakes, took hold of the crank-rod and began to pump. Petrika Hamza stayed on top of the paling, his shadow cast high among the stars; beneath it the watery purple lights of the points blinked.

"I think the best thing would be if I took you with me a little way," said the Doc. "We'd better stay together for a while."

"Alright," I replied, "you can take me to Colonel Jean Tomoioaga, to the guardpost. He's a friend of mine."

"I know, I know. And in the meanwhile, let's kill the bottle. Or have you a better idea? What d'you think we should do?"

"I can't think of anything right now."

"Neither can I. I think we'd better get as far away as we can from here."

"Incidentally, how do they get them down, usually?"

"They don't," replied the Doc angrily. "It isn't usual to get them down. I think even if you did manage to get hold of their legs from down below, you'd only make the stake go deeper in."

"I just wondered."

"It's his business, you have no right to interfere. You shouldn't even think of it. D'you know you can talk to some of them for days?"

Once the station was left behind, the tracks began to ascend; pumping hard, we rolled out of the village, the clacking of the wheels preceeding us along the tracks; all the way up the hillside along the embankment the barking of dogs rolled and surged.

"So there's now a vacancy up at your bear garden," I said.

"Possibly two."

"Because I wouldn't mind going into the woods with you," I continued. "I'll talk to the medic lieutenant colonel. Maybe I can pull some strings and get myself inoculated. If you have no objections, I'd really like to work with you. I don't pretend to know the first thing about bears but I can learn."

"I can't promise you anything."

"But what if?"

"We'll see. I think I'll be by myself for a good while."

I stayed on the trolley with Doc Oleinek until we came to the entrance of the reserve, where a hurricane lamp shone with a red light on the level-crossing gate barring the rails. My old chess partner, Colonel Jean Tomoioaga, lived at the guardpost. I had counted on spending some time with him that evening in any case, had planned before leaving to have a couple of drinks together and to walk back to the village some time during the night.

The hurricane lamp was soon set down on the threshold and Jean Tomoioaga replaced the red glass with a white one, then brought out the chessmen. We played on a green and white chequered shirt spread upon the floor, with handcarved, clumsy little chessmen; board and figures could be gathered and stowed away noiselessly with a flick of the wrist. Games of that kind were frowned upon in the Mountain Light Infantry. Doc Oleinek was in no hurry, he too sat down on the threshold beside the hurricane lamp and waited for us to set up the pieces. It seemed he did not feel like moving on.

"I see you're going back alone," said Colonel Jean Tomoioaga to him. "Did our friend get a bit of extra leave then?"

"That's right. I let him go."

Colonel Jean Tomoioaga pulled out a bottle from beneath his bunk and set it down on the floor within easy reach of all three of us. A bluish-grey liquid splashed about in it, methylated spirits that had been strained through charcoal. Charcoal is good for you, they say.

"And when will he be coming back, may I ask? You know very well that I have to record all movement in the book."

"He'll be here when he comes. And you can record him. And if he doesn't come, then you won't record him."

We were into our second or third game with Jean Tomoioaga when Petrika Hamza's wispy fair hair flared up on the black velvet of the valley before the door. Not the hair of the Petrika Hamza who had impaled himself, but the other's. He stood in the open door, skin blooming with the falling dew, and did not in the least smell of blood.

"Where is he?" he asked Doc Oleinek in a stern tone of voice.

"You can see very well that he isn't here."

"I want to speak to my brother at once."

"Well, you can't right now."

He stood there in the door, hands in his pockets, and, as if we weren't there, cast his eyes around the tiny guardpost.

"Dammit, Doc, I can see you've got his boots, so I'm not going to ask you where my brother's feet have got to." And he pointed a finger at me. "Tell me, is this the man that is to take our place?"

"That remains to be seen," said the Doc, not contradicting him. "But if you're beginning to catch on, then listen: I'm telling you that you can go. You're free, so beat it. The sooner the better. Somewhere, you know where, your brother, Petrika Hamza is waiting for you. I promised him also that I would not raise the alarm right away."

Petrika Hamza sat down on the ground and clutched at his hair, but it was so fine and wispy that his hands came away empty. He spat into his palm, rubbed his hands together, then got up. His face was suddenly smooth and still, he had calmed down.

"Alright, Doc. I'll get my things together. But promise you won't come after me straight away."

"If that's what you want, alright. How much time do you need? Will twenty minutes do? Or half an hour?"

"Half an hour was just what I had in mind. I'd like to be by myself until then."

"Okay son. You're right. Take your time."

Petrika Hamza picked up his brother's rubber boots, put them under his arm and set off for the bear garden without saying goodbye. He kept breaking wind, very loud, as he walked, as though he were on the point of giving up the ghost. After a couple of steps the velvety darkness and the babbling of the brook closed around him.

Doc Oleinek gave him well over the promised half hour and even then he first stretched his limbs painstakigly. He threw the shoulder bag full of bottles over his shoulder impassively and made for the trolley.

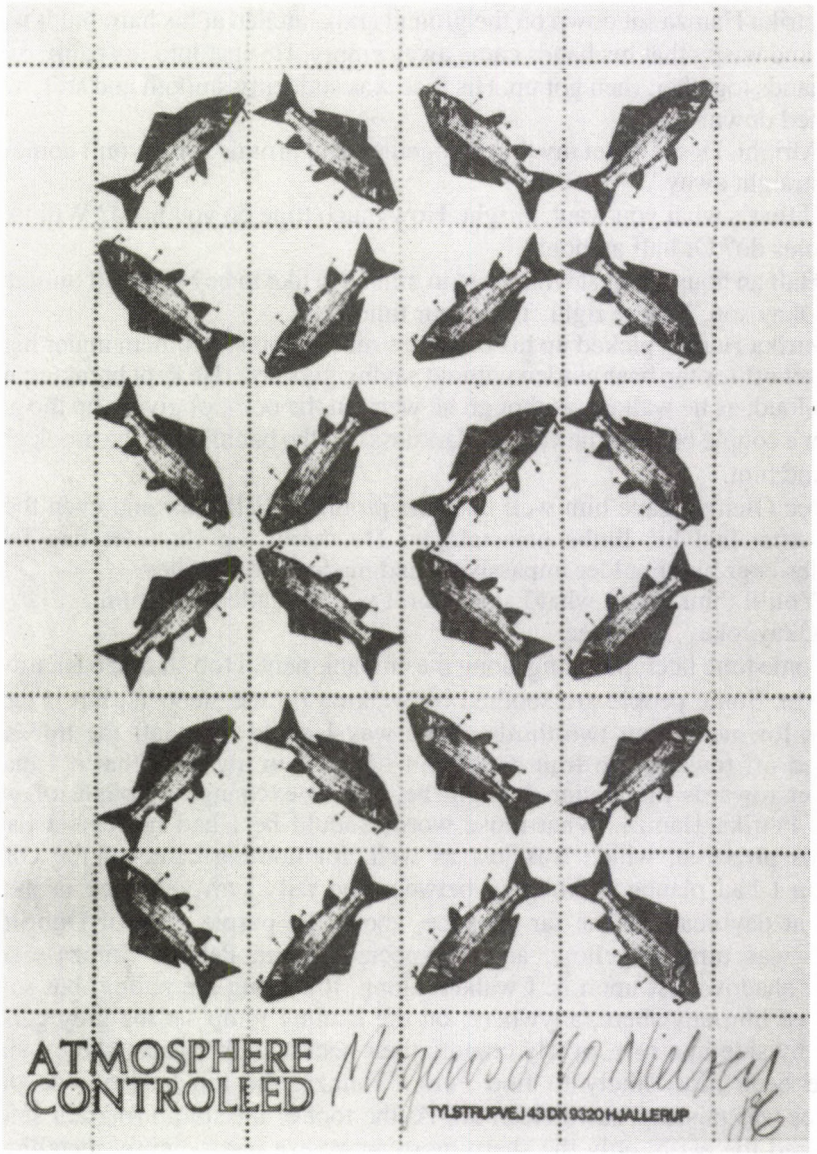
"You'll think about what I said, won't you?" I called after him.

"Okay, okay, we'll see."

Some time later, plodding along the embankment, I too started back towards Dobrin. Some people are soothed by walking on the sleepers, but it did not work for me. About two-thirds of the way I could have left the tracks and turned off towards the fruit depot, but I took it in my head that if I made a detour towards the station I might be able to exchange a couple of words with Petrika Hamza. What those words should be I had no idea. I had no words prepared, which was just as well, for nothing came of the conversation I had planned. Trudging between the rails I arrived back at the station at daybreak. In the far distance, above the purple crest of Dobrin, the sky was turning yellow, and I expected to see Petrika Hamza's scarecrow shadow cast upon it. I walked along, following the paling, but saw no sign of him anywhere, anywhere; on the loading ramp sat the grey ganders, side by side in a row, overly craning their necks. In the place where I should have been most likely to find Perika Hamza, the top half of one of the stakes was missing, sawn clean off. At the foot of the stump fragrant sawdust covered the earth, only the sharp morning breeze had a lightly metallic tang to it—a little bit salty, a little bit sweet—like blood.

It was getting light, and I was already thinking about the future. I decided not to go to bed at all, but to look up the medic lieutenant colonel instead; maybe he really would make an exception and inoculate me. This could be the chance I had been waiting for.

Translated by Eszter Molnár



Morgens Otto Nielsen, Denmark

Klára Makara

A Wasting Disease

The Health of the Nation

The old cabaret joke went that the "free, comprehensive and quality" health care in the communist system can only manage to cover two of the three: it may be comprehensive and of quality but not free, or free and of quality but not comprehensive, or even comprehensive and free perhaps, but not of quality. Since the political change, the situation has even deteroriated in that the standard and quality of life, and with it people's ability to shoulder new burdens, has been going down steadily for years. Since domestic and foreign debt is sky high, the state is unlikely to be able to spend more on health care at a time when the prices of health care basics are on the rise. Nevertheless, it is not only the poverty and limited efficiency of the health system that should be blamed for conditions commonly labelled alarming.

According to the State Secretary in the Ministry of Health, András Jávor, Hungary annually spends $140-150 per capita on health care. That amounts to 4.9 per cent of GDP, a figure in keeping with the country's level of economic development, more or less on a par with Turkey. Yet the statistical data for Hungary, and for all other successor states in the former communist bloc indicate that there seems to be some common root cause behind the fact that the incidence of illness is higher than these countries' overall development would lead one to expect—and life expectancy is lower here than in the Western world. One of the indices of frequency of illness shows that an average 6.9 per cent of Hungary's economically active population was on sick leave on any given day in 1990, a ratio much higher than in any neighbouring country.

Death, however, is the real index, unmanipulable and objective. Hungary provided a favourable picture here until the mid-1960s: there was a fall in infant and child mortality and a spectacular rise in life expectancy when both were compared with pre-war figures. All this was due to better nutrition, vaccination and antibiotics. Since the mid-1960s, however, indices for the adult population have shown a constant decline. The average mortality rate climbed to the level of the 1940s; that of men skyrocketed, back up to what it had been in the 1930s. Only the most recent years have witnessed stagnation or some minor improvement here. Expressed in identical age group ratios, Hungarian mortality is 43 per cent higher than the Austrian and 63 per cent higher than the Swedish

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which leads the table. Male life expectancy in Hungary is 65.4 years; women live an average of 73.8 years.

The increase in mortality rates is only partly due to the population's "ageing": heart and cardiovascular problems and tumours are other factors here. Of late, an alarming growth has also occurred in the frequency of cirrhosis of the liver. What we are facing here is clearly the effect of long-lasting and only slowly correctable social and lifestyle factors, rather than a suddenly emerging biological cause. There is hardly a family in Hungary which has not lost a member due to early heart failure. In the late 1980s every fifth Hungarian male died of coronary disease. Half of the increase in male mortality is due to coronary and cerebrovascular disease; there is a five-fold increase in the number of cirrhosis cases and lung cancer cases have doubled. These used to be referred to as civilizational diseases, supposed to be the consequence of prosperity and an increased lifespan. Epidemiologists today say that Hungarians have inappropriate nutritional habits, they suffer from excess weight and lack of exercise, smoking and stress, all effects of problems mainly connected with work. Sociological analysis points out that, contrary to the widespread belief that heart failure is an "executive's disease", cardiovascular diseases occur more frequently in the lower ranks of the social hierarchy. We are unequal even in that death takes its heaviest toll among unskilled male workers and villagers are worse off than city dwellers. A social survey that was made in the early 1980s was left unpublished for political reasons; it happened to show a "West German" mortality rate in the exclusive second district of Budapest, and a "Syrian" mortality rate in the eighth district, mainly inhabited by proles.

The slogan "Health is our most precious treasure!" rang hollow in recent decades, since economic interests and social practice pulled in different directions. As a consequence of several causes, including physical proximity of consumer societies, the gap between the demands of Hungary's population and the potential to meet them created considerable tension. Ill effects of that tension are triggered off by the fact that most people exploit themselves by taking second jobs in order to acquire what they consider indispensable, and they spend an ever increasing number of the day's 24 hours working. There is no time left for recreation, sports or even the family itself; human contacts become shallow, communities hollow; all this is taking its toll on people's ability to withstand stress and solve problems. (This last does not only kill by causing diseases but also acccounts for the rise in the frequency of suicide.)

The real causes of high mortality are improper nutrition (cholesterol-rich and fibre-poor food), lack of exercise, excess weight as a consequence of these two, and smoking. Another main risk, ignored or mistreated, is high blood pressure. (53 per cent of all deaths in Hungary in 1987 were caused by diseases of the cardiovascular system: 13 per cent of the total population suffer from such a condition.)

In the former communist countries, the conditions necessary to counter this problem on a societal scale, i.e., a healthier lifestyle, are still missing. Although

fruit and vegetables are in constant supply, steeply rising prices make it increasingly difficult to persuade people to change their nutritional habits. Excessive drinking is also on the rise. According to the latest (1989) data, the number of registered alcoholics (that is, those who have been clinic inmates or have received psychiatric treatment) is 71,000 as compared to a mere 50,000 registered at the beginning of the eighties. The number of unregistered alcoholics is, however, estimated to be far higher: 224,000 in 1980 and 590,000 in 1989. Drug abuse is also current, especially among the young. While there are no reliable data on drug abusers, some estimates put their number at 50,000. This is, alas, only the beginning of a sad trend.

Overweight, a risk factor in many health problems, is much more a "popular disease", with its origins in the traditions of Hungarian cooking and the lack of exercise. A 1986 survey shows that 15 per cent of Hungary's population are underweight, 25 per cent are of normal weight and 60 per cent are overweight. 38 per cent of the population was found to exceed normal values by over 15 per cent. Even in the age group of 15 to 19 years, 17 per cent are overweight, while the ratio climbs to 29 per cent in the 20 to 30 years age group.

Closely connected with this, a lack of exercise is shown by a survey that indicates that 90 per cent of the active population pursue no sports; this figure is shocking enough but it includes an even more shocking 83,3 per cent of the 15-19 year age group. The occasionally spectacular Hungarian success in international competiton is a success gained by professional athletes, a very small section of society. The vast majority of Hungarians simply watch spectator sports on television—as they smoke, drink and nibble. There is no time, money or facilities for amateur sports to be pursued on a mass scale.

THE GROWTH IN PATIENTS (PER 1,000 INHABITANTS) RECEIVING CONTINUOUS MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR SOME CHRONIC DISEASES

	1980	1990
Cardiovascular complaints		
Budapest	37.4	62.3
outside Budapest	39.0	78.8
nationwide	38.7	68.2
Digestive tract complaints		
Budapest	9.3	12.5
outside Budapest	9.6	12.1
nationwide	9.5	12.2
Endocrinological (hormonal) complaints		
Budapest	19.3	28.1
outside Budapest	8.8	18.2
nationwide	10.8	20.2

On January 1, 1990, Hungary had a population of 10,568,000
Source: Ministry of Welfare

All the above makes it clear why long-lasting, degenerative diseases appear earlier in Hungarians' lives than in Westerners' (or in the Hungarians of the early 1960s) and how degenerative processes lead to earlier death.

It is also worth noting that the health conditions of Hungary's population have been steadily worsening over the last three decades, regardless of the fact that living standards happened to be rising, falling or stagnating at any given time. Cardiovascular diseases top the list. That is likely to be due to there never having been a long enough period of rising living standards that would have induced enough self-regard in the majority to enhance the chances of leading a healthier life, with a higher value attributed to human life and with more modern attitudes to health. Today's socio-economic processes, the decline in living standards and rising unemployment do not offer hope of improvement in any of the above areas. Job-connected health problems are likely to become worse in the short run.

The final factor exercising a negative influence on the sorry state of Hungary's health is the backwardness, from decades ago and now rapidly worsening, of the health sector. This non-profit area has not been appropriately financed for many years. Most health institutions operate in antiquated buildings and struggle with chronic shortages of instruments and medicines, a situation which the sudden introduction of world market prices in Hungary has not helped. Bureaucratic overregulation and the lack of financial incentives hinder the exploitation of the domestic technical potential, which is poor enough anyway. No health care administrators with skills in economics and leadership have so far emerged in the top seats of health institutions. Even the professional standards of physicians are being endangered by the cream of underpaid researchers seeking employment abroad.

On the other hand, in spite of the incredibly high interest rates on bank loans, private health care enterprises are on the increase. At least some of the customary lined envelopes will be handed over across the counter rather than discreetly slipped into doctors' pockets and the wealthy may have themselves treated in more comfortable surroundings. The vast majority will, however, have to go on waiting long hours in corridors to see the doctor, to have lab samples taken or to be X-rayed; a stay in hospital will go on meaning overcrowded wards, dry shower stalls and inedible food, since hospitals can no more afford to provide healthy and nutritious food than enough disposable needles or cotton wool. In a world governed by shortages, the desire for better than average treatment made tips to the medical staff an everyday occurence, creating a mutually humiliating and immoral relationship between them and their patients. A doctor who refuses the envelope containing about half the monthly salary of one of his poorer patients, offered for some routine surgery, is now a rare bird. This inevitably poses the question of whether opportunities in the narrow range of more sophisticated treatment or surgery are allocated according to need, medical indications, or tips.

Some maintain that lavishness and poverty are both present in Hungary's health care. They point to the too frequent encounters between doctor and

patient (14.5 times per inhabitant), the overlong hospital stays, stemming in part from the lack of proper organization and partly from routine check-ups and pre-treatment laboratory tests having to be done in hospitals. Everything takes place at a higher level than necessary: hospitals do the work of clinics, clinics perform the duties of a family doctor, panel doctors perform tasks that a nurse could do just as well—but nurses are hard to find and must often do the work a cleaning woman should. Doctors' (official) salaries are a joke, with no actual connection until very recently between work done and the amount they received.

While everyone is well aware that the health sector alone cannot significantly improve the health situation, this does not mean we should not strive to improve prevention, recognize budding diseases and cure or at least protract and make tolerable the lives of as many patients as possible. Since achieving these aims is mostly a question of money, a more logical use of resources, facilities and equipment is of literally vital significance. While this is one of the objectives of

SOME HEALTH INDICES IN HUNGARY

CHILD MORTALITY:
1960: 0.0476 per cent
1989: 0.0257 per cent

AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY:
Europe: 75 years
Hungary: 70.1 years

MORTALITY RATE OF THE 34-44 AGE GROUP
(NUMBER OF DEATHS PER 100,000 INHABITANTS):

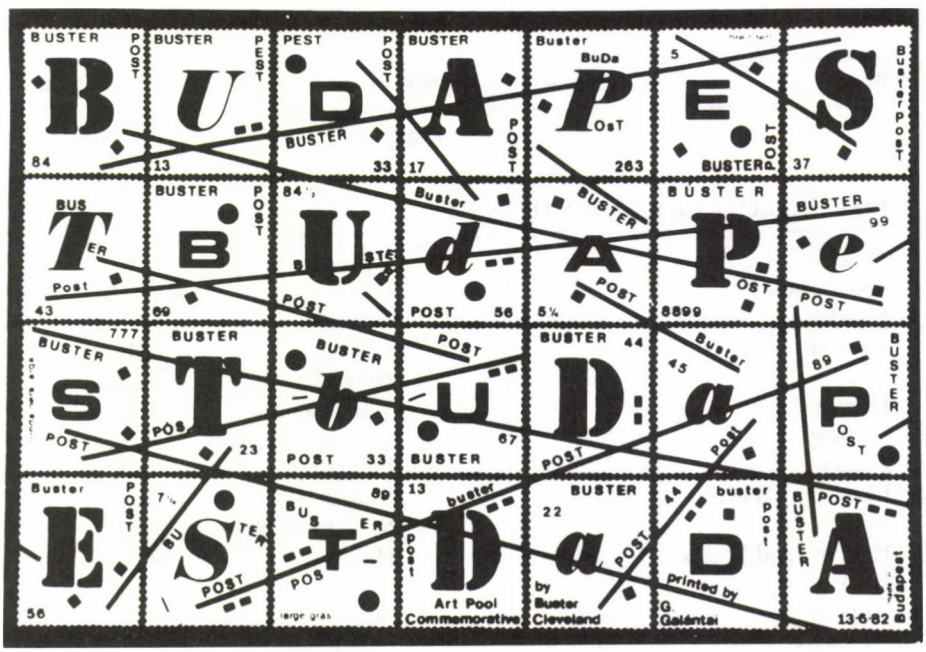
Hungary:		Sweden:	
men	women	men	women
511.9	255.0	179.8	105.1

LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH IN 1987

Japan	78.9	Finland	74.6
Switzerland	77.4	Belgium	74.2
Sweden	77.0	Portugal	73.9
Iceland	76.9	GDR	72.8
Spain	76.4	Bulgaria	71.5
Greece	76.4	Yugoslavia	70.9
Norway	76.4	Czecho-Slovakia	70.9
France	75.8	Poland	70.9
Germany (West)	75.4	Rumania	69.8
Italy	75.4	Soviet Union	69.8
England and Wales	75.4	Hungary	69.7
USA	74.9		
Austria	74.8	(Source: Info-Társadalom-tudomány	
Denmark	74.7		

the reform underway in the health sector, the decentralized (local authorities') participation in financing health care endangers the implementation of even the best central plans.

The State Secretary in the Ministry of Welfare says that, though great emphasis in the future will be given to prevention (which is no longer supposed to be only long sermons to self-destructive individuals), the idea has been given up of targeting the whole nation in their health maintenance and prevention projects. Aware that decades will be needed to see those projects take effect, they are focusing their attention on the young by, for instance, organizing a "Healthy School" movement. As to health care itself, the reform ideas include a re-organization with family doctors, freely chosen and paid according to the number of their patients, as the pivot of the new primary network. Out goes the former principle of receiving free care as a right: resembling the Medicare system of the U.S., health care will be provided on an insurance basis. Supplementary insurance will take care of everything beyond the basic services. Many people regard these ideas as a retrograde step in providing social services. Yet, the organizing principles of need and solvency replacing the shady system of allocation built on bribes and string-pulling may eventually be appreciated.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Péter Balázs

How Can the European Community Be Expanded?

The move towards West European integration and the disintegration of Eastern Europe is producing relations unimaginable hitherto. The Warsaw Treaty and the threatening posture with NATO has gone, the Helsinki process have entered a new phase, blocks within international organizations are breaking up and the outlines of an increasingly integrated European configuration are discernible. The greatest pressure is exercised on the EC by those countries which want to join it, including Hungary. If all of them were allowed in, the Community would be much enlarged—which it clearly does not desire. Other forms of European economic cooperation are imaginable, but it is the model of the EC that seems to be the most successful, despite its complexity and high costs, and consequently the most attractive for those outside. This article examines some of the contradictions in the expansion of the EC and one possible way of resolving them.

An expanding Community with ever harsher conditions?

The Treaty of Rome declares that every democratic European country may join the European Community.[1] After the collapse of dictatorships in Southern Europe, the EC expanded southwards. It has to be noted that the NATO orientation of the foreign policies of Greece, Spain and Portugal was clear even when their domestic regimes were anti-democratic. Now that East European communism has also collapsed, it seems that sooner or later every country on the Continent will meet the above conditions for entry into the EC. For the time being the "twelve" officially oppose new access claims until they have completed the Single European Market, planned for January 1, 1993.[2] Leading politicians have been making contradictory statements on expanding the Community. Helmut Kohl warns of the dilution of the EC, while John Major, like his predecessor Margaret Thatcher, would welcome every European country. They obviously represent two trends which have always been present in the EC. One claims that a loose intergovernmental cooperation could be extended to the entire Continent, the other argues that a federal organization has already exceeded optimum size with 12 members and further expansion, especially in the direction of Europe's more backward regions, would put a higher degree of integration at risk. The official position of the EC reflects the latter approach. By putting off any definite answer until after 1993, the EC is playing for time and there is little enough of that, however things may come to those who are patient. The real obstacle will be the conditions for access, which are getting tougher and which may make the wait infinite.

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It is becoming increasingly untenable for the EC to keep to itself in the new European constellation. There are no treaties to which the EC can point to justify this to the new would-be members. As regards the present criteria of joining and association, the EC is actually faced with the option of either declaring that the twelve member Community is, to some extent, isolated from the other countries of Europe (and this should be put in an appropriate legal form, such as a modification of the Single Europe Charter), or of sacrificing the monolithic federal model of integration. This latter course does not require any modification to the basic agreements, but giving up, or at least moderating, some of the current plans, (such as the Economic and Monetary Union or the Political Union) would be inevitable. Neither of these prospects is attractive to the Community, nor is it in the interest of the non-member European countries to isolate or weaken their major trading partner. Jacques Delors, the President of the EC Commission, is trying to escape the dilemma of enlarging or deepening the integration; he claims that the two divergent development courses are actually interdependent.[3] There is no doubt that the new applicants would prefer to join a strong and vigorous EC, in which the process of integration has gathered new momentum, and not some weak successor sometime in the unforeseeable future. Should the centre of gravity of the integration shift to the East or to the South (as has actually started with German unification), the distance between the frontrunners and the newcomers would grow further. All these questions will be decided within the EC; only their repercussions will be felt in the EC's external relations. In the political climate of the 1990s, the expansion or isolation of the EC should be considered from the point of view of the interrelated interests of the 28 countries in Europe.[4] The 16 non-member countries make up three main groups. The main feature they have in common is that they are all within the circle of attraction of the EC. Getting closer to the Single European Market is a crucial element in their external economic policies in the short run, and a lasting relationship with the EC is their long-term aim. The Community is also their main trade and cooperation partner (or is becoming it, as in the case of the former Comecon member countries).[5]

Three non-member South European countries—Turkey, Malta and Cyprus—have already submitted applications to join the EC. Their relationship with the EC has always been close and clear, but in view of Turkey's geographical location and cultural and religious background, and the smallness of the two island countries, the chances of their joining the EC soon do not seem to be particularly high.

For a considerable period, EFTA operated apart from the EC, but since 1984 the two organizations have been cooperating. At present the six EFTA member states are having talks with the EC members about the establishment of a European Economic Area. Previously, only Austria had applied for EC membership, but if the outcome of the EEA talks is not satisfactory, other EFTA members may also choose to apply.

Of the seven post-communist states of Central and Eastern Europe, Hungary, Czecho-Slovakia and Poland have declared that they wish to join the EC, and their new governments see these efforts as having a stabilizing effect on domestic and foreign policy.[6] As democratization and stabilization progresses, all the Balkan states may shortly express a similar desire. From the two later categories a new "developing" dimension of the EC is emerging southwards and eastwards from the industrialized centre of the EC (one manifestation of this is the PHARE programme)[7].

With these prospects in mind, we should recall the fact that the seven years between

the last enlargement (1986) to a possible new round of negotiations on joining the EC (1993) are years of further significant areas of the so called *acquis communautaire*. The Single Market calls for considerable Community legislation, and the European Economic Area will probably add to Community regulations, as will German unification. This maze of rules and legislation would in itself be sufficient to discourage new applicants, since it is a condition of entry to the EC that each newcomer adopts the entire Community package. However, the attraction of the EC, especially because of its 1992 programme, has grown to such an extent that joining has become a priority for non-members, a priority which overrules common sense arguments that they should weigh their ability to integrate themselves into the EC in the light of the mass of rules and regulations they are obliged to adopt once they do join. The first southward enlargement of the Community was in itself an encouraging example that the tribulations of joining can be successfully overcome through a careful staging of the transition. (If Portugal could, why could not Hungary?) But a few aggregated indices reveal precious little about the levels of real economic integration: about the density and intensity of capital, research, marketing, etc. relations.

Risks of the Community becoming a Comecon look-alike

The end of the division of Europe into East and West probably began with German unification (the precise turning point will be determined by future historians). The West has expressed the fear of running the risk of East Europeanization, or of sinking to the level of the developing world.[8] Similarly, the danger of Balkanization of the former European Soviet empire has also been mentioned. However, Jacques Delors argued that "it is not the West that is sliding towards the East, but rather it is the West that is attracting the East."[9] This certainly holds true as far as the end result of the historic contest between command and market economies is concerned.

Not only the would-be new members are obliged to adopt an ever growing amount of *acquis communautaire,* but the Community that embraces them may itself change considerably. The present 12-member EC obviously has a different cohesion, ability to act, and incentives for integration, than an organization consisting of 16, 20 or 28 members. The addition of further members should involve a change in certain conditions lest it might launch a process which could be best described as the EC becoming a Comecon look-alike.

The principal cause of the collapse of Comecon was that a war economy continued during the Cold War years and expressed itself in central planning in political isolation. Some structural conclusions can be drawn from its failure.[10] For one thing, the number of its members proved to be obstructive. According to international law, Comecon has only ten member states. However, the Soviet Union consisted of 15 federal republics (and also of a number of autonomous regions, such as Bashkiria and Tatarstan, which now claim the status of republics within the Russian or other republics). These considered, Comecon consisted of at least 24 members. The huge size was reflected in the clumsiness of the organization. Another of its characteristics was centralized operation and all the red tape this involved, with various committees and numerous officials working out hosts of rules and recommendations of little practical use. Finally, Comecon insisted on equal treatment for its members, who differed widely in level of development and character, since homogeneity was seen as a synonym for

unity and cohesion. In fact it was from this fiction that the clumsiness of the organization and inability to harmonize specific interests derived from.

The EC is a heavily centralized and highly bureaucratic organization, although it has maintained its homogeneity so far. Indeed, it is a miracle that with 12 members, a greater number than the optimum for economic integrations, the EC is still operational. But if the number of its members increases and if it retains its present character, there will inevitably be a shackling bureaucracy, irresolvable conficts of national interests and total unworkability. Obviously, the present members of the EC, just as the aspiring members, would like to avoid such a contingency. If we start out from the fact that the EC, the generally acknowledged centre for European integration, has to accept every democratic country of the Continent building a market economy, then it will have to give up the principle of homogenous treatment for all members. This step would be regarded as an important political change. Yet "the Community either develops politically or will degenerate."[11] The "Comeconization" of the EC is one possible scenario for that degeneration.

A closer study of the conditions of joining the EC should start from the fact that the original meaning of the Treaty of Rome was for the founder countries to develop a customs union within twelve years and to shape a common policy in agriculture. Those East and South European countries interested in EC membership cannot be forced to accept stiffer conditions just because—for historic and political reasons—they knocked on the door of European integration only later. Consequently, the EC has to renounce rapid and complete acceptance of the ever more stringent *acquis communautaire* as a condition for entry. That would mean renouncing the rules and requirements of the most advanced "hardcore", whereas several prospective members are from the more backward regions of the Continent. Negotiations on the European Economic Area between the EC and EFTA show that even the advanced EFTA countries are only willing to adopt the *acquis* with many reservations. It is even more difficult for the Southern and Eastern European countries to absorb the mass of Community rules; the EC would probably be able to give less help to its 20th member than it could to its 10th, or for that matter, to the "13th", the former GDR, which was itself a special case.

European stages: association or membership

At the moment there are two ways of closer contacts: (external) association and full membership. In keeping with Article 238 of the Treaty of Rome, the Community offers two new forms of association. These are participation in the European Economic Area for EFTA members as a whole,[12] and what are called European Agreements concluded with Central and East European countries. The Central and East European countries are worried because the EC is reluctant to set full membership even as a distant target in the association agreements, while not excluding the possibility either. The EC treats membership as an open possibility only, making it dependent on the future situation and the future interest of all parties, and of the Community.[13]

This contradiction seems insoluble in the framework of the present structure of EC integration and the external relations which are based on them. For a redrawn structure to solve the problem, not only the necessity but also a possible outline is beginning to emerge. Naturally, its creation demands considerable political skill and imagination all round. In the following I shall attempt to outline a possible model.

Sketch for a new all-European integration structure: fitting "concentric circles" into the Community

"New architecture of the Continent" has become a fashionable term in the last two years. Many ideas have been aired at conferences and in political discussions. The real value of these ideas varies. Most start out from the central role of the EC and usually get as far as the limits of the Helsinki circle, attempting to furnish a reassuring security policy, economic, cultural and social cooperation.[14] Let us look at another possible all-European blueprint, viewed from a Central or East European aspect. Such a renewed and expanding European integration model should have a single centre, a concentric build-up, and conditionality in keeping with the following:

– European economic integration organized around three centres definitely came to an end by the early 1990s. EFTA is prepared to carry out radical adjustment to the EC (and its own internal organization). The East European countries are vying with each other to establish closer links with the EC, as they no longer regard any possible successor to Comecon as a suitable framework for their international trading relations. Europe is becoming single-centred, with the EC as its axis.

– A single-centred Europe cannot form a homogeneous structure but has to take the form of concentric circles, as Jacques Delors himself has put it. But the place of individual countries within that structure should not be determined by the countries concerned alone, nor by a few, however powerful and closely linked, countries. Conditions of membership should be determined by international consensus.

– Consensus should be based on conditionality. Currently there are two extreme versions of it. There are global European economic organizations, like the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the UN Economic Commission for Europe, to which every European country belongs. These organizations have assumed a truly global character over recent decades and conditions of entry are absent. Bloc politics have produced a division within such organizations for the last 40 years, with the blocs engaging in dialogue, but also confronting one another time and again. The interest reconciliation mechanisms were rather clumsy. There are also those organizations which set well-defined criteria of entry: the Council of Europe, GATT or OECD as they have been set up by Western market economies with pluralist political systems. Warsaw Pact and Comecon members found their standards of requirements hard or impossible to meet. Even if some managed to join some of those organizations, say GATT, they only got as far as some kind of second class membership. These organizations may constitute the starting point for a European integration linked to certain conditions.[15]

Every state in Europe now wants to be democratic with a market economy. The question remains what known model the market economy will resemble: will it take after the West European model of a strong government creating a stable macro-economic structure and a growing freedom of international transactions, or will it resemble some Latin American countries by following an opposite path of development? The desirable model, as seen by the advanced part of Europe, is this: "a market economy based on Western, European, liberal, democratic principles and property relations, with a freely elected parliament and independent courts."[16]

The monocentric and multi-staged European integration structure could embrace through gradual expansion all those states that manage to meet certain criteria. The general political, economic and integration criteria could be the following: mem-

bership of the Council of Europe,[17] membership in GATT, the IMF and the World Bank; this, while allowing temporarily for some particularities of the East European economies going through a period of transition, essentially rests on the fundamental norms of a market economy and members have to comply with these norms; a regular relationship and intensive cooperation with the OECD, with full membership in mind;[18] close contactual relations (association) with the core of the integration that is, the countries that are implementing a European (political, economic and monetary) Union, that is, in the present situation with the Twelve and also with the second circle of the integration, the countries that form the European Economic Area.

Stages of integration: European Union, European Economic Area, European Association

Those countries that meet the above criteria and have agreed to accept the appropriate international obligations, could constitute a new "All-European Community" (under whatever name) that is based on uniform standards, however differentiated are its members. As evidence for their identity (a powerful motivation for their "return" to Europe, alongside economic efficiency and expectations of thus improving their living standards) these countries could use the blue flag adorned with the twelve stars, which the EC has in fact "borrowed" from the Council of Europe. This Community would consist of three concentric circles:

1) Its innermost core would be the European Union, representing the highest level of integration. For the rest of the countries, joining the Union would neither be a condition of entry, nor an ultimate aim;

2) Certain countries could remain in the European Economic Area constituting the second of the concentric circles. This would provide free trade, and the gradual development of a "free economic zone" for services, capital and labour;

3) For other countries, it would be sufficient to join the internal (European) association, the third concentric circle of an enlarged new "Community" open to the European countries. This would be different from the form of association the EC has established with non-European countries (under Article 238 of the Treaty of Rome), and which can be treated as "external" association by international organizations, that is, it is part of the external relations of the Community.

It is important to reiterate that all three degrees described would be inside the "All European Community". At the same time, external association would continue and, as opposed to internal association, it would neither have the aim nor the possibility of membership of the Community, or within that, of the Economic Area of the Union. Hence external association would be open to powers closely affected by and actively participating in all-European cooperation, such as the USA or Russia or Canada.

The idea described above would resolve some tensions connected with the political and economic problems of association with, or entry to, the EC, the EC/EFTA dilemma of some countries, as well as the use of European symbols and names. A multi-stage community would be an encouraging prospect for the non-EC countries. It would not ask them to meet conditions which they can only fulfil with difficulty or not at all, in order to have themselves acknowledged as "European". Nor would such a community risk in any way the present and future integration of the Twelve.

The notion of concentric circles is not alien to the EC, though Jacques Delors and others would like to see these circles—except for the central one—outside the Community. Within the Twelve, however, they reject the idea of two or more rates of integration.

If these concentric circles were not ditches protecting the integration of a number of countries, and were not relegated to an external relations role but were stages within the organization, than it would be easier, or at least possible, to communicate between them. The main tendency would be centripetal, but some present members of the EC would eventually not advance further towards the "Union", but would be satisfied with the stage of integration achieved, and would line up with those countries that have caught up with them to form the second concentric circle, the European Economic Area. Similarly, no member of the expanded Community should fear that it would be forced to stay in the outer circle; rather it will find the road to the centre of the integration open, provided the appropriate criteria are met.

A well-balanced all-European integration would thus be outlined through three concentric circles of roughly equal size: 8-12 countries would constitute the Union, the European Economic Area would embrace 18-22 countries, together with the above, and the "All-European Community" would consist of some 30 or more member countries.

The European integration process has always derived new energies from the recognition of new situations and from adjustment to them. Once again a new situation is developing in Europe, behind which lies the collective interest of all states of the Continent. The countries of the Continent are looking towards the EC, since it plays a key role: it cannot stay closed, but must not get diluted or degenerate (become Comeconized), putting what it has achieved, or the chances of closer cooperation, at risk.

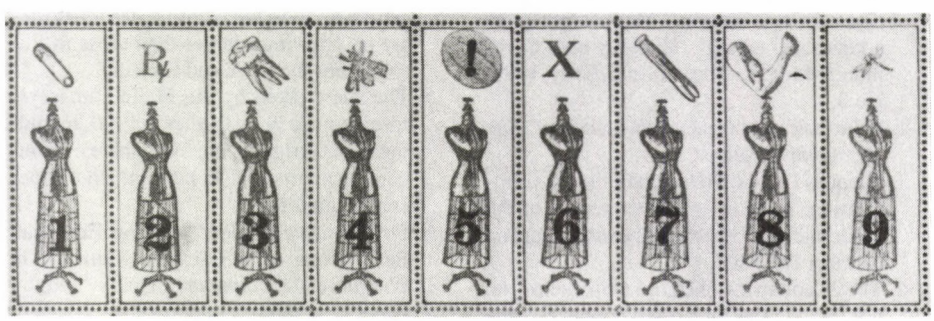
If the EC were to recognize the situation, and were ready to pioneer the formation of a new, open integration structure, assume a central role, but give up homogeneity; accept new members without insisting on their becoming fully integrated, then it would open the road to further European integration. In this case the Twelve would eventually sacrifice their present name, but would keep their central place and gather new energies that could give an impetus to integration.

NOTES

1. The beginning of Article 237 of the Treaty of Rome reads: "Any European state may apply to become a member of the Community." The conditions created by precedent, including a democratic political system, are described in detail by Egon Dienes-Oehm: "Magyarország és a közösségi tagság" (Hungary and Community Membership). *Külgazdaság*, 1991, No.3.
2. "The makings of a new constellation", *The Economist*, August
3. Jacques Delors, President of the EC Commission, in Bruges, at the opening of the academic year of the European College, on October 17, 1989.
4. The 28 countries taken in a closer sense, do not include the four small countries—the Vatican, Liechtenstein, San Marino and Monaco—which appear separately within the Conference on European Security and Cooperation and which form an economic union with their dominant neighbours, nor those countries that are partly or wholly outside Europe, but still participate in European cooperation, the former Soviet Union (whose European centre and interest are obvious, but whose Asian territories are several times larger than those in Europe), nor the USA and Canada.
5. The share taken by the EC in Hungary's foreign trade grew further in 1990. Including East Germany, the EC's share of Hungary's exports was 35 per cent, and 37 per cent of imports.
6. Dr Margaret Bluden: "Central European Perceptions of a European Future", in *Widening the Community Circle?* ed. by Clive H. Church, London 1990.
7. The July 14, 1989 PHARE programme,

which originally targeted at assisting Hungary and Poland, was extended to Czecho-Slovakia, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria on September 17, 1990.

8. Pierre Hassner: "Europe Beyond Partition and Unity: Disintegration or Reconstruction?" *International Affairs,* 1990, No. 3.
9. See note 3.
10. Péter Balázs: "Az európai szabadkereskedelem és a KGST-EK kapcsolatok" (European Free Trade and Comecon-EC Contacts), *Külgazdasági Szemle,* April 1990.
11. Christopher Layton: "Une seule Europe." *Economica,* Paris, 1986. p.l6.
12. The EC and EFTA began talks in December 1989 about a new, more sophisticated form of integration called "European Economic Area", after ministers of member countries of the two organizations met. The legal basis of the future agreement is Article 238 of the Treaty of Rome, which discusses associations.
13. *Allgemeines Schema für Assoziations–abkommen mit den Ländern in Mittel- und Osteuropa, Mitteilung der Kommission an den Rat und das Europäische Parlament,* KOM.paragraph 90/398, August 27, 1990.
14. See, e.g. Michael Mertes, Norbert J. Prill: "Der verhängnisvolle Irrtum eines Entweder-Oder. Eine Vision für Europa, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* July 19, 1989. 10.
15. Anders Aslund: Systemic Change in Eastern Europe and East-West Trade. *EFTA Occasional Papers* No. 31. June 1990, p. 18.
16. Timothy Garton Ash: "Revolution: The Springtime of Two Nations", *The New York Review of Books,* June 15, 1989, quoted by Aslund, p. 10, see note 15.
17. Hungary became a member of the Council of Europe on November 6, 1990, and Czecho-Slovakia on February 25, 1991.
18. Czecho-Slovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, Rumania, and Hungary are members of GATT. Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, Czecho-Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Rumania are members of the IMF and the World Bank. The OECD Secretariat created a new unit in the middle of 1990, called "Centre for Economies in Transition", which deals with the problems of the European Comecon countries. In December 1990, it offered closer cooperation to Hungary, Czecho-Slovakia and Poland as part of the "partners in transition" programme.
19. Hungary, Poland and Czecho-Slovakia laid the foundations of tripartite cooperation with the Visegrád Declaration on February 15, 1991.
20. Frans A. M. Alting von Geusau: *Beyond the European Community.* Leyden, 1969, p. 229.



Mario Laro, U. S. A.

András Bozóki

Democracy Across the Negotiating Table

The end of 1988 and the beginning of 1989 saw the rapid formation of political parties in Hungary. Following the Federation of Young Democrats (FIDESZ), the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) and the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), some of the "historical" parties (those that had been forced out of politics by the communists at the end of the 40s) also reappeared. Those that reorganized themselves in this way were the Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP), the Hungarian Social Democratic Party (MSZDP), the Hungarian People's Party (MNP), and the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP). While each of the parties in the first group had grown out of a civic movement formed in the course of several years of opposition to the Kádár regime, the historical parties laid emphasis on the legal continuity of their existence.

The MDF was launched at a meeting in Lakitelek village in the autumn of 1987. Politically situated between the ruling Communist Party and the opposition, this independent populist movement rejected both Soviet-type communism and western-type capitalism. (This is known in Hungary as the "third way"). The MDF leadership sought allies with the nationalists within the Communist Party's (MSZMP) reformist wing, a group whose best name was Imre Pozsgay's. His aim was to create a new power centre for left-wing politics; in this the founding members of the MDF (Zoltán Bíró, Mihály Bihari, Sándor Lezsák) were willing to cooperate with him against both the conservative leadership of the Communist Party (János Kádár, János Berecz, and later Károly Grósz) and the radicals of the democratic opposition (János Kis, Miklós Haraszti, László Rajk, jr.). In its first year, the MDF did indeed operate as a forum, organizing debates in the Budapest Jurta Theatre which attracted many intellectuals holding critical and oppositional views. At their second meeting held at Lakitelek, however, the MDF leaders decided to turn the movement into a political organization, gradually abandoning their original political and economic programme (the "third way") in favour of a strategy designed to win centre-right votes.

The SZDSZ grew out of urban underground, liberal and radical in character, which had been fighting for freedom of speech, human rights, democracy and constitutionalism in Hungary for over a decade. Members of this group were closely linked with various opposition groups in other eastern-bloc countries. These included Charta '77 in Prague and KSS-KOR in Poland, which helped to launch Solidarity. The immediate precursor of the SZDSZ was an organization called the Free Initiatives Network, created to establish communication between various unofficial groups otherwise often work-

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ing in isolation. However, this network structure soon proved to be inadequate; informal cooperation between the various groups was politically insufficient. Recognition of this led the majority of the Network members to the conclusion that the time was ripe to set up a party. The result was that in November 1988 the politically more organized SZDSZ replaced the Network.

FIDESZ was formed in March 1988. Its founding members were mainly students of law and economics, who had earlier been involved in various movements at hostels for students of particular faculties. The founding members of FIDESZ received their basic political orientation during the last phase of the Kádár era. Generally dissatisfied with the higher education system, they created for themselves new and autonomous organizations. At the forefront of their thinking lay individual liberties, constitutionalism, basic human rights, and non-violence. Originally, FIDESZ was launched as a simple alternative to the Young Communist League (KISZ), but by 1989 it had gone on to better things and had become a liberal and radical political party primarily mobilizing the young.

These three political parties all grew out of close cooperation within their own membership. In contrast, the "historical" parties were bound together only by forty-year-old memories of their old-timers, who were generally suspicious of new recruits from the younger generations. For each of these parties, much time and effort was needed to bring about party unity. (In point of fact, neither the Hungarian Social Democratic Party nor the Hungarian People's Party have been able to achieve any coherent unity to this day.)

The new parties and organizations paved the way for a more articulate political structure. In the course of the process, however, various ideological divisions, familiar in the past but swept under the carpet by the various totalitarian regimes, reemerged. It was not possible to get on with the reconstruction of Hungary without first facing up to the unpleasant truth about the pre-communist history of the country. Thus, the Kádár regime's former opposition (both hard and soft) rallied behind the human rights issue and the question of national identity; on the other hand, and in conjunction with the appearance of these modern political values, the traditional ideologies staged a comeback. The process of political differentiation was not confined to the ranks of the opposition. The Communist Party, too, began to show signs of pluralism: in addition to the old guard there was now a reformist wing advocating "democratic socialism", as well as a pragmatist group of new technocrats.

By January 1989, it became apparent to all the newly formed political parties that the communist government and its Parliament were unable to tackle the country's massive problems. The communists had neither a well-prepared plan nor the legitimacy needed to manage the crisis. That small measure of legitimacy which the Communist Party might still have possessed in the eyes of some was shattered by Imre Pozsgay's brave declaration in late January, that 1956, always described officially as a "counter-revolution", was a "popular uprising." The struggle within the Communist Party that followed the announcement eventually led to the Central Committee's assent to a multi-party state. This contributed to the rapid downfall of the system that had prevailed for forty years. In the meantime, a negotiated transition had begun in Poland, involving the most important political forces in the country.

In the view of the Hungarian opposition, it was both rational and feasible to follow this example (which at the time was the only one to follow), regardless of the differences which existed between the two countries. Political analysts in Hungary were considering the chances of calling a

constituent assembly, and the "New March Front", a grouping of intellectuals closely connected to the reformist wing of the Communist Party (MSZMP), attempted to set up a "national committee" with delegates invited from all the important political organizations of the country. All these efforts were aimed at replacing the parliament (elected in 1985 according to the communist electoral system and thus carrying very little weight) by a constituent body more representative of the new political situation. Nevertheless, a number of the opposition parties rejected the idea of a round-table conference patterned on the Polish example, saying that such a conference would do more to conceal the opposing political views than to bring them into the open.

Internally divided as it was, the MSZMP still dominated the official scene. The forces of the opposition were too weak and unorganized in themselves, and they were only gaining in influence slowly and gradually. There was a danger that the MSZMP would benefit from the opposition's insistence on preserving its initial pluralism (instead of forming a united anti-totalitarian front in the Polish fashion). There was also a danger that a transition might follow in which the MSZMP would be able to dictate all the moves as well as the pace, carefully keeping every change within the existing system. To weld the divided opposition together and to make it capable of united action became a matter of vital importance.

The birth of the round-table

March 15th, the day marking the outbreak of the1848 Revolution in Hungary, was once again declared an official holiday. It provided an occasion for the opposition to experience the full breadth of its popular support. Hundreds of thousands came out on the streets to cheer opposition speakers. The various groups gained confidence and a sense of legitimacy from this; they now had every reason to believe that it was not just students and professional people who were responding to their call but a much wider public. All that now remained was to see who would be the first to call for the unity of the opposition. In the end it was the Independent Forum of Jurists (FJF), a body not affiliated to any of the parties, which took the iniative after the successful demonstrations of March 15th. They proposed that the parties and organizations of the opposition should immediately start negotiations on the most urgent problems of the political transition. The FJF offered to arrange for the meetings and promised to help reconcile the differences and to provide professional legal assistance in drawing up the documents. The parties invited accepted the proposal and on March 22nd 1989, the Opposition Round-table (EKA) came together. The organizations that took part at the first meeting were the Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Society (BZSBT), FIDESZ, the Smallholders, MDF, SZDSZ, the Hungarian Social Democrats (MSZDP), and the Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions (FSZDL). They were subsequently joined by the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP).

The setting up of the EKA provoked the MSZMP leadership into a flurry of activity. Their immediate reaction was to try to speed up the series of talks they had been holding with individual parties since March. They had hoped to be able to divide the opposition by negotiating with its various factions separately. However, the opposition parties consistently demanded that, to make it clear that the MSZMP and the opposition represented two completely opposed sides, a square table be used during the talks rather than a round one. This they justified by pointing out that the conflict here was one between power and society and, therefore, the negotiations had to take a bilateral form. It was during the next

Political Trends

TRENDS	LEFTIST CONSERVATIVES	CONFORMIST TECHNOCRATS, PRAGMATISTS	DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS, REFORM-COMMUNISTS
VALUES	Bolshevik-Stalinist	Value-neutral	Socialist democracy
ISSUES	cenralized planned economy one-party system order (vs. anarchy) COMECON autarchy cells in the structure of employment	stability party unity power maintenance democratic centralism	limited multi-party system socialist mixed economy local self-government socialization of institutions "ideal" (non-statist) socialism
ORGANIZATIONS	Ferenc Münnich Society (MFT) MSZMP (Leninist circles)	Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP)	MSZP Union for a Leftist Alternative (BAL) Democratic Youth Alliance (DEMISZ), reform wing
SOCIAL BASES	older party apparatchiks	bureaucracy some former MSZMP members (cadre-elite) intellectuals	younger generation of former MSZMP members

round of talks, held between the MSZMP leadership and the delegates of the EKA in preparation for the negotiations, that the most important principle of the EKA's modus operandi was reinforced, namely the principle of consensus. This meant that every participant in the EKA was permitted to negotiate separately, but statements on behalf of the EKA could only be made with the agreement of all the eight parties.

in Hungary, 1989

SOCIAL DEMOCRATS	RADICALS AND LIBERALS	DEMOCRATIC POPULISTS	POPULIST CONSERVATIVES
Welfare state	Civil liberties	"Third way"	National identity
multiparty system mixed economy social policy representative democracy	multiparty system mixed economy human rights representative democracy free ventures social policy social minorities	local communities ("Garden Hungary") multiparty system self-government direct democracy mixed economy Hungarian minorities	romantic concept of nation and community organic improvement society as a moral phenomenon "God-Family-Nation" Hungarian minorities traditions collective rights
Hungarian Social Democratic Party (MSZDP) Young Social Democrats (SZIM) FIDESZ, SZDSZ left wing	Free Democrats (SZDSZ) Young Democrats' Alliance (FIDESZ) Hungarian October Party (MOP) Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Society (BZSBT)	Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) Hungarian People's Party (MNP)	MDF right wing Party for Independence (MFP) Christian-Democratic People's Party (KDNP) Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP)
urban middle class working strata	urban intellectuals students private entrepreneurs	country professional middle class private entrepreneurs	non-urban strata

This table contains neither the different single-issue movements, nor the large number of trade unions, cultural and other associations for safeguarding the interests of certain strata. Those are beyond the scope of this paper.

This allowed the EKA to preserve its unity and to remain at the centre of future negotiations.

EKA delegates were of the opinion that the subject of the negotiations had to be confined to those issues which were vital from the viewpoint of a peaceful and democratic transition (i.e., the electoral law, certain amendments to the penal code, legislation regulating the activities of the

political parties, etc.). In contrast, the MSZMP wished to discuss every important issue in the political, economic and social sphere. According to the EKA, the current Parliament was not legitimate and, therefore, should not be permitted to debate fundamental issues that were not directly connected with the transition. For this reason, they were against leaving discussion of constitutional matters and of the authority of both the President of the Republic and of the Constitutional Court to Parliament. Despite these differences, the MSZMP finally accepted the point that the aim of the negotiations should be the creation of conditions for a peaceful transition to pluralist parliamentary democracy.

Time was not on the MSZMP's side and it was forced to abandon its delaying tactics. By late May, 1989 the MSZMP realized that the negotiations with the EKA had greatly affected its own standing in the eyes of the western powers. In Poland, the round-table conferences had come to an end and elections were looming. President Bush's visit to Hungary, scheduled for July, was drawing near. But the event that kept the communist leaders in suspense more than anything else was the reburial of Imre Nagy and his fellow-martyrs of 1956 on June 16—the very date that the ex-Prime Minister had been executed. For different reasons, both the reformists and conservatives within the Communist Party were equally apprehensive of this day. The communist leadership understood that they had to come to an agreement with the EKA on the agenda of the talks before June 16, otherwise the day of the reburial might bring them a serious political defeat. They would have liked to turn June 16 into "a day of national reconciliation"—an occasion when the communists and the opposition could mourn side by side—rather than having it be a "Day of Judgement" of the Communist Party by the Hungarian public.

As things stood, the advantage lay with the EKA. The communists were forced to make concessions: they finally accepted that the MSZMP and the EKA should sit on opposite sides of the table during the talks. However, this success for the EKA was somewhat blemished by the fact that the MSZMP managed to include its affiliates at the talks: the Patriotic People's Front, the Hungarian Women's Council, the Münnich Ferenc Society, the Union for Leftist Alternative, the Democratic Youth Alliance (the successor of the Young Communist League), and the Alliance of the Hungarian Resistance and Anti-Fascist Movement. It was agreed that, similarly to the individual members of the EKA, these organizations, too, were required to represent a single view during the talks. This arrangement, while limiting the manoeuvring space of the individual organizations—organizations which often represented very different views—had the overall effect of improving the negotiating position of the MSZMP.

The tripartite negotiations

On June 13, three days before the reburial of Imre Nagy, representatives of the three sides met in Parliament to make a declaration on their intentions.

The MSZMP's statement was read out by Károly Grósz, the Party's General Secretary, while Imre Kónya presented the views of the EKA and István Kukorelli made a declaration on behalf of the third side present. Grósz spoke of the need for a peaceful transition, making the point that the changes had been initiated by the one-party state. Kónya emphasized that Hungary belonged to the people inhabiting it, and that the negotiations were about keeping the country on course to free elections, rather than about acquiring a share in power. Kukorelli claimed that the organizations that made up the third side had disengaged themselves from the Commu-

nist Party, and that these organizations, although not wishing to remain politically neutral, did not want to be controlled by any single party. In the week that followed, delegates of the three sides agreed on an agenda and on procedures. The participants decided that there would be a number of advisory sub-committees to discuss both the political and the economic issues (six sub-committees in each case); the sub-committees would submit their conclusions, as well as those points on which agreement could not be reached, for discussion by a mid-level panel of politicians; and the final agreements on each of the issues would be drawn up during plenary sessions.

The MSZMP succeeded in having the economic problems given equal weight at the talks; this caused heated debate and a temporary split in EKA ranks. The sub-committees to discuss the economic issues were as follows:

1. economic crisis management (inflation, foreign debt)
2. social policy
3. reform of ownership
4. land ownership, agricultural cooperatives
5. budgetary reforms
6. regulation of competition, anti-monopoly measures.

The economic discussions led nowhere. Although negotiations were kept going until the end of September, no real progress was made. It soon turned out that the MSZMP leadership, at whose insistence the economic questions had been added to the agenda, was not interested in speeding up talks. Their original idea was to make economic discussions a condition for political concessions. By late June, however, Grósz had ceased to control the MSZMP; a four-man directorate (Nyers, Grósz, Németh, Pozsgay) with a reformist majority, replaced one-man rule. By late July, following a by-election which returned the first opposition MP to Parliament, it also became clear that both the policy of concessions and the plan of making democracy a gift from above, were of limited potential.

The crucial political issues of the transition were grouped together:

1. amendments to the constitution (the President of the Republic, the Constitutional Court)
2. legislation dealing with political parties and their financing
3. electoral law
4. the guiding principles in amending the penal code
5. access to publicity, information policy
6. guarantees for a peaceful transition.

A detailed discussion of all the points is outside the scope of the present article. Only the issues in which agreement could not be reached will be discussed.

1. Initially, the EKA was not willing to discuss amendments to the constitution, as EKA members felt that this was up to a freely elected Parliament. Since, however, the MSZMP was apprehensive of the elections, its leadership looked for institutional guarantees to enable them to hang on to the remnants of their power. Their insistence on adding the status of the President of the Republic to the agenda sprang from their conviction that the opposition would be unable to nominate a candidate for that post who would be a match for Imre Pozsgay, still at the peak of his popularity, and thus the presidency would fall into the hands of the reformist wing of the MSZMP. The communists argued that, at a time when the political legitimacy of Parliament was being questioned, there was a need for a head of state elected directly by the people, whose legitimacy was beyond doubt, so that he be able to guarantee continuity in the period of transition. This argument was rejected by the EKA, whose delegates said that neither participants in the tripartite negotiations, nor the current Parliament had been authorized by the people to introduce such a fundamental constitutional change. In the end the EKA was forced to make

concessions in this matter. As a compromise, the EKA suggested that presidential functions—temporarily and in a form defined in an earlier statute, Act I of 1946—should be assumed by Parliament, in place of the Presidential Council,which was to be abolished. That meant the President having limited powers and a role of guaranteeing the balance between the legislative and the executive branches rather than acting as a separate power. The Presidency would not be above the constituted authorities, and could only exert its power via the responsible government. The MSZMP accepted this compromise, and in October 1989, Mátyás Szűrős, a former Hungarian Ambassador to Moscow, was elected as President ad interim of the newly proclaimed Republic.

No agreement was reached, however, as to who would elect the President (i.e., the people or Parliament), and when the President would be elected (i.e., before or after parliamentary elections).

The MSZMP was of the opinion that the President should be elected directly by the people. Their primary motive was political, as has already been mentioned: the Communist Party had a popular politician to put forward as candidate, while the potential candidates of the opposition were, given the way the media had allotted space, almost unknown to the public.

The EKA was united in the opinion that a parliamentary democracy, rather than a presidential system, would serve Hungary's interests best, since it would be a guarantee against one-man rule. Even if the constitution gave limited powers to the President, the fact that he was elected directly would lend him more legitimacy than to members of parliament elected on a party ticket. The EKA put forward the argument that, on grounds of constitutional law, the acceptable solution in a parliamentary democracy was to let Parliament itself, which embodies the will of the people, elect the President.

With regard to the time of the presidential election, the MSZMP argued for it being held as soon as possible, i.e. prior to parliamentary elections, in order to preserve the country's constitutional stability. The EKA rejected this saying that firstly, the situation was not unstable, and secondly, a quick presidential election would not make it more stable. The EKA was also worried that the holding of the presidential election before parliamentary elections might have an adverse effect on the competition between the parties, or might even jeopardize the fairness of the elections, enabling the communist elite to retain some of their power. The EKA wanted to avoid the situation that arose in Poland, and thought that the old system could not be abolished completely if a former communist were to win a hastily arranged presidential election.

Since, however, the MSZMP desperately wanted to see its own candidate as President of the country (and here they did not mean the post of interim President), it became vital for them to split the EKA and to have their position accepted on this question. Using various methods, the MSZMP put pressure on moderates amongst the opposition—on those who at the Lakitelek meeting of September, 1987 had preferred to ally themselves with the reformists inside the MSZMP, rather than with the radical, western-minded opposition. First to yield to this pressure were the smaller parties of the "Christian-National bloc" (i.e., parties with Christian and national ideologies, such as the MNP, the KDNP and the BZSBT); then the FKGP followed suit, and finally, after much hesitation, the MDF also decided to back the MSZMP proposal. Although the MDF agreed in principle that the new President should be elected by Parliament, it was prepared to make an exception for the first election. Accordingly it supported the proposal that, exceptionally, in this instance the President of the Hungarian Republic be elected by the people

before the parliamentary elections to come. The reasons behind the MDF's cautious and compromising approach here were primarily rooted in foreign policy considerations.

Consequently, on this particular issue the EKA was practically split in two; the four organizations (FIDESZ, MSZDP, FSZDL, SZDSZ), which stood by the original agreement, found themselves in a minority within the EKA. As a result of this rift between the radical and the moderate wings of the opposition, no decision could be taken, and on the tripartite negotiations the EKA postponed a statement in this matter right until the middle of September.

Negotiations in the sub-committee working out the legal conditions under which the political parties could operate soon broke down. On the grounds that a multi-party system should not cost the national budget more than did the one-party system, the EKA suggested that the MSZMP should account for finances and assets, and the operations of the newly founded parties should be financed from these resources on an equal basis. The MSZMP responded to this demand by categorically declaring that "the assets of the party had been acquired by legal means throughout the past forty-five years, and only the membership of the MSZMP had the right to call its leaders to account; other parties and organizations were not entitled to make any such demand under any pretext."

This response nearly wrecked the negotiations. It overlooked the fact that, in the majority of cases, MSZMP assets were government property, for which the party did not have the standing of an owner, but only that of a trustee. Gábor Demszky exposed the MSZMP's secret attempts to misappropriate these assets, attempts very much at variance with the party's alleged intention to mend its ways and operate as a democratic party.The hard-line position of the MSZMP was not in the slightest softened by the disclosure of its dubious dealings; its delegates merely promised to produce an account of the party assets in the forthcoming party conference in October.

Thus, the EK had failed to make any progress in this matter through negotiations, just as it had failed to ensure that MSZMP structures, which were part of the executive of firms, authorities, schools etc., would no longer operate. That would have been necessary so as to prevent the MSZMP from exerting political pressure on the work force and to give regionally organized political parties an equal chance in elections. Although Imre Pozsgay made a promise that his party would withdraw from places of work by December 31, 1989, this was rejected outright by the Central Committee of the MSZMP. As a result, the situation in September 1989 was as follows: the draft of the legislation guaranteeing the conditions under which political parties could operate was ready, while the MSZMP refused to account for its assets or to withdraw from the places of work.

3. An important objective in the negotiations was an agreement on the guarantees to ensure that the transition would be of a peaceful character. While the opposing sides were able to agree on how to define the period of transition—setting its beginning as the tripartite negotiations and its end as the inauguration of the new government—the same could not be said for a definition of "peaceful character". At the root of the disagreement lay the EKA's unwillingness to define civil disobedience and political strikes as political violence.

On the very first day of the talks, the EKA proposed the outright abolition of the Workers' Militia, a paramilitary organization created by the Communist Party; it also proposed that the state security organizations and the public security organizations be separated, that the Hungarian army not be deployed in domestic affairs, that party control over

the armed services be removed, that an independent committee be established to handle crisis management in the event of provocation, that firearms in the possession of civilians for self-defence be handed in, and that calling on foreign armed forces to act in Hungary be explicitly prohibited.

The structural changes proposed by the opposition in the state security organizations were not accepted either by the MSZMP or by the third side. The Communist Party suggested open legislation concerning the organizations, supervised either by Parliament or by the Chief Prosecutor, the third side would have been satisfied with parliamentary control. No agreement was reached, therefore. No reorganization of the state security services took place, and even supervision by Parliament or the Chief Prosecutor was forgotten. It was this dissent on the part of the MSZMP and the third side that allowed the state security services of the Ministry of the Interior to employ unconstitutional methods right up to January, 1990, when the Dunagate-scandal exploded. (It was discovered that the security services were illegally monitoring the telephone conversations of a large number of opposition politicians.)

In the matter of the Workers' Militia, the MSZMP continued to look for excuses: it agreed to its formal abolition, but first thought that this would take place after the period of transition, and suggested the setting up of a "national guard"; at another time, it informed the EKA that the government had ordered the Minister of Defence to clarify the position of the Workers' Militia by December 31, 1989, and since that would involve the overall defence strategy of Hungary, "we should not prejudge an anticipated decision by the government". By August, the MSZMP modified its position to the effect that the Workers' Militia would be abolished in its then form and integrated into the Army as a territorial force. The third side initially protested against passing off final arrangements as "transitional", then recommended the reorganization of the Workers' Militia on the pattern of the Austrian, Swedish or Swiss reserve militias. Neither of the proposals were accepted by the EKA; nor was the MSZMP's offer to disarm the Workers' Militia and to allow it to function as a non-military organization. The EKA's starting point was that the Workers' Militia was a symbol of the totalitarian one-party state and that its continuous existence, be it under a new name or new control, was irreconcilable with parliamentary democracy.

By September 1989, tension was mounting both between the parties making up the EKA and between the sides participating in tripartite negotiations. The public was expecting results and the MSZMP was willing to make smaller concessions in order to be able to get its own views accepted in the issues pending. The government wanted to submit its proposed legislation to Parliament; the reformist wing of the MSZMP desperately needed results in the talks, in order to have something to show in the upcoming party conference. The pressure on the EKA was continuous.

The EKA's modus operandi, required total approval for each decision: the sword of Damocles (in the form of a split) had been hanging over the EKA ever since early August. The Group of Five(BZSBT, FKGP, KDNP, MDF, MNP) were of the opinion that the results accomplished so far should not be put at risk and that an agreement with the Communist Party should be signed despite the existing differences of opinion over the most important questions. This view was rejected by the Group of Four (FIDESZ, FSZDL, MSZDP, SZDSZ), whose representatives thought that there would not be parliamentary democracy in Hungary if 1) the Workers' Militia were not disbanded, 2) a President of the Republic was elected before the parliamentary elections, 3) the

MSZMP did not account for the assets held in its trust, and 4) it did not withdraw from places of work. On these grounds, the Group of Four refused to sign the agreement. Patient negotiations helped to maintain the unity of the EKA, on the surface at least, right up to September 18, the day set for the televised plenary meeting on which the agreement was due to be signed. The Social Democratic Party decided to sign the document, with the exception of the paragraph dealing with the election of the President of the Republic. The Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions, which took part in the negotiations as an observer, abstained.

Eventually, only FIDESZ and the SZDSZ decided against signing the document both as a matter of principle and for political considerations.

The parties of the radical opposition were able to stick to their guns despite pressure from the MDF and its allies by making a deal: they relinquished their veto in return for being allowed to put their case in public. The MDF and its allies, on the other hand, wanted to sign the agreement and wished to avoid it being vetoed by other organizations. Hence came the compromise whereby certain members of the EKA refrained from signing but did not prevent the other organizations from signing the pact.

On that day, the story of the EKA effectively ended. Although it formally continued until the free elections, the political role of the EKA in Hungary's democratic transition came to an end. The rift was marked very distinctly by the campaigns of FIDESZ and the SZDSZ in the weeks following September 18. They collected well over the hundred thousand signatures required by the Constitution, demanding a plebiscite on the four issues which had been left unsettled, and then conducted a powerful and successful campaign which led to their winning the plebiscite on November 26. In late October, MSZMP, the only party of the communist state, changed its name to MSZP, the Hungarian Socialist Party, of incomparably smaller weight. During the autumn months, the split between EKA members gradually turned into keen rivalry between the MDF and the SZDSZ.

The division of the opposition had no ill effects on the success of the political transition. The act of signature guaranteed that what had been accomplished in negotiations would not be lost, and the crucial laws were pushed through Parliament still in October, just in time for the declaration of the Republic of Hungary. The fact, however, that not all the parties signed the agreement enabled the opposition to avoid being forced into a Polish-type pact with the communists, which had there proved to be an obstacle to free elections. In Poland, the pact signed with the communists before the elections set limits on the success of Solidarity, and effectively illustrated the limitations of political transitions arrived at purely by negotiation. It turned out that without mass participation the system could not be changed completely. In Hungary, unlike in East-Germany or in Czecho-Slovakia, there were no mass demonstrations to bring down the regime; neither was there any need for a bloody anti-totalitarian insurrection of the kind that took place in Rumania. The specific trait of the Hungarian political transition was that the potentials of a negotiated transition were exhausted but the process did not stop there; it was concluded by the people itself on the day of the plebiscite initiated by the parties refusing to sign the agreement. This plebiscite of November 26 finally removed the obstacles that had been standing in the way of holding free elections; furthermore it created the conditions for something which was beyond the power of the EKA: a parliamentary democracy instead of a post-communist presidential government.

Generally speaking, three phases of the successful political transition from

dictatorship to democracy can be distinguished. These are 1) the erosion of the old regime; 2) the moment of liberation; 3) the consolidation of the new power, the period of establishing the new institutions. The central characters of the transition are the "makers of politics" (the representatives of both the old and the new political elite) on the one hand, and the pressure groups, or the masses, of civil society on the other hand, with the latter demonstrating their political will in a less articulated form, and often not exclusively or even primarily via political parties. The "makers of politics" of the old regime can be classified as reformists and conservatives; similarly, the "makers of politics" within the incoming elite can be divided into two groups: moderates and radicals. All four groups have an important role to play in the process of political transition. The first phase of the transition is usually marked by the struggle between the conservative and the reformist forces within the Communist Party, in which the chances of liberal reforms are at stake. This is followed by the confrontation between the ruling elite and the opposition in the second phase, when the fundamental point at issue is the gradual introduction of democratic changes: the question of whether to have reforms or democracy. And finally, with the old ruling elite losing ground in the third phase, we see the struggle between the moderate and the radical elements of the opposition. In the course of the struggle between different political styles (moderate or radical) the emphasis is gradually shifted to real political and ideological differences. By that time the point at issue is the concrete form of democracy.

In Hungary, the historical importance of the EKA lay in its ability to unite the previously divided opposition forces, thus clearly drawing the "front line" in the second phase of the transition between representatives of the old regime on the one hand, and the representatives of democracy on the other. The appearance of the EKA meant a choice between reform and democracy; it also meant a political commitment to the latter.The birth of the EKA served democratic transition but, paradoxically, so did its death, by not standing in the way of the process of political pluralism, and by not becoming a kind of "National Liberation Front" or "Civil Forum". The EKA helped to preserve the peaceful character of the transition, without at the same time blocking the way to a competitive multi-party system. It embodied the political strategy of the opposition at a unique time—a political strategy that stood somewhere between the Polish round-table conference and the "velvet" revolution of the East-Germans and the Czecho-Slovaks.

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Light for the Economy?

Only in retrospect will we be able to tell whether 1991 showed signs of an easing of the economic crisis or simply a further step into recession. All the same, the contradictions of transition suggest that what we are in for is not so much a lessening of the crisis as a change in its form.

For a long time it was considered to be just the private view of a select group of financial leaders and fanatical economists that the country was maintaining full employment, stable prices and egalitarianism at the cost of an enormously growing foreign debt. It was only when money needed to service this debt was blatantly being pulled out of his pocket in the form of inflation that the man in the street began to feel the pressure of this dead-end economic policy. Already looming are the outlines of a new phase in the crisis, a phase in which the price of combating inflation will have to be paid by mass layoffs. It seems rather likely that any financial success achieved by the Hungarian economy will soon be seen as the private affair of a small group by a growing proportion of an increasingly impoverished population.

A recent report by the Hungarian Economic Research Institute sums up the situation in economic jargon as one where "real and monetary processes diverge".

The then chairman of the Hungarian National Bank, the central bank, whose duty it is to safeguard the country's creditworthiness and the purchasing power of the forint, had every reason to be content, the current account being better than expected and inflation having slowed down. The National Bank registered a current account surplus of $300 million in mid-September, as against a deficit of $1 billion expected in 1991. The then chairman, György Surányi, believed that inflation would, perhaps, not exceed 30-32 per cent in 1991.

But several independent economists say that this is only a relative success on the part of an economy which is sinking into recession and which will probably produce a GDP 7 per cent smaller than last year. Because of the shrinking of the economy, these financial achievements, apparently depending on events which are not necessarily to be repeated, will also be short lived.

This impressive current account rests on foundations such as working capital transfers, currency savings deposits by individuals and a rather high income from

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tourism; these foundations could easily crumble any time. The locomotive for genuine improvement would be growth in production and the restructuring of foreign trade, the economists argue; however in these areas established structures are collapsing much more rapidly than promising new structures can be built.

In any case it is more difficult than ever to assess the state of the economy—no longer command, and not yet market; economic conceptions have become blurred, information systems have collapsed and the advantages and disadvantages accompanying transition overlap; what is a long-desired achievement for one individual, may be sheer bad fortune for another.

For instance defining privatization, which is in the focus of public interest at the moment, is not simple either. Many economic associations which are considered to be private companies from a legal point of view, are actually state companies from an economic point of view because there is a majority state ownership in them. Perhaps this is the reason for the cautious terms used by Finance Minister Kupa, who said that out of 2,200 Hungarian industrial companies so far 600 "have been brushed by the wind of privatization".

According to some calculations, including those of the Privatization Research Institute, about half of Hungary's productive assets are no longer in state hands; this, however, does not necessarily mean private ownership in the classical meaning of the term.

Statistics reveal a veritable venture-founding fever of hitherto unseen proportions: in one and a half years the number has swelled from 15,000 to 42,000. All the same it is hard to say how many of them are new and how many have emerged as a result of the splitting of large state firms. Neither is the weight of the mushrooming small and medium-sized ventures within the national economy yet known. György Vukovics, president of the Central Statistical Office, said in a report to the government that "statistics have limited means at the moment to trace the developments of a rapid transition period and to follow the processes of an economic microsphere which has grown enormously. There is very little reliable data on the small business sphere."

There are only indirect methods by which the performance of this "latent" sphere can be judged. For example, although the outputs of almost all industries have dropped by almost a quarter, energy consumption has fallen only slightly, which indicates that "someone" has been using up the difference.

Everyone can interpret the ever scarcer authentic economic information to suit themselves. It is an intellectual five finger exercise for party politicians irritated by what they call the "failure propaganda" of the press, to watch how many different meanings the same fact can have for different participants in the economy. Thus the 7 per cent drop in domestic demand this year has virtually finished off a number of manufacturing firms, but the Ministry of Finance hails it as an achievement which, after the fiascoes of earlier years, proves that strict monetary control can keep the lid on purchasing power.

The fall in demand has been exacerbated by the fact that individual consumption fell 6 per cent as a concomitant of a 3-4 per cent decline in real incomes. The

difference manifested itself in a net growth of $2.25 billion in personal savings. The National Bank called this development a historic change and said this unexpected surge in savings can be used to finance the unexpected part of the budget deficit.

But there are two sides to the coin. What is a drop in demand—and a headache for the producer—is also a growth in supply because there are no longer articles in shortage. At least it is a buyer's market, but only for those who have a job or a regular income. The continuous decline in investment, which this year reached 10 per cent, could almost be called dramatic, while the Finance Ministry is clapping its hands in joy that firms have at last seen the light and given up their old reckless habit of forcing uneconomic investment. The fall in production this year will probably culminate in scores of bankruptcies next year, but some critics still argue that this will finally end the agony of those state owned firms that have been kept alive by repeated infusions of subsidies. In the light of all this, it seems rather bold to volunteer any kind of forecast; indeed it is far too easy to blame the prophets for the fallacies of earlier forecasts.

Those non-government economists who predicted a near 50 per cent inflation for 1991 at the end of last year, reckoned that world market oil prices would rocket sky high because of the Gulf crisis then coming to its climax. The same event made the government forecast only 33-35 per cent consumer price inflation (it cannot be established how 37-38 per cent came to be known as "officially planned inflation") and the government proposed to finance a presumably hefty energy bill by planning a large current account deficit.

The fact that the projected energy crisis never took place is obvious enough explanation for the "errors" of the forecasts. It similarly explains why "inflation has been kept under control", that the current account is "surprisingly good" and, thanks to the savings of the public, the state was still able to overspend.

In terms of roulette, the bank has won and everyone else lost this year. Neither independent experts nor the government hit the corrrect GDP figure. The GDP drop forecast of 4-5 per cent of early this year was modified to 6 per cent at the beginning of summer, and to around 8 per cent in recent weeks; this was because the 60 per cent fall in East European trade surpassed even the most pessimistic forecasts. Naturally, a dual vision may be applied here, too. While optimists keep stressing the fact that Hungary boosted exports to convertible markets by 30 per cent this year and that this was clearly a "recovery sign", pessimists argue that overall exports will still be 7-8 per cent down on last year, and imports are growing by one third. The inevitable consequence will be that the trade deficit will reach at least $1 billion by the end of the year.

Judgement on the inflow of foreign working capital is similarly ambivalent. The $1 billion of foreign capital transferred to Hungary is clearly a record; however, while the average foreign capital invested in the 227 joint ventures in Hungary in 1988 was 44 million forints, the same average was only 14 million forints for 8,770 joint ventures in June this year. It is clear that many more foreign

Debt management

The September edition of the British financial monthly *Euromoney* named the National Bank of Hungary "borrower of the year". *Euromoney* has beeen rating the most active financial in stitutions of the international capital market for ten years.

"We feel that the National Bank has done something outstanding by making the international financial community accept the country's situation; it has also managed to acquire credits on excellent terms under the given circumstances," was deputy editor Paul King's comment when asked by the Hungarian weekly *Heti Világgazdaság*.

The announcement of *Euromoney*'s accolade coincided almost to the day with a National Bank bond issue in Frankfort which was originally planned at 250 million DM but had to be doubled in view of the great demand. This bond issue was another step on the road the National Bank first took over two years ago: to raise the money required to service the country's external debt of about 20 billion dollars more and more via bond issues rather than via new loans.

In fact, by doing so the National Bank can make a virtue of necessity. It is a necessity because the market in syndicated loans has shrunk heavily of late, with banks increasingly reluctant to take risks. But it may also become a virtue because whoever issues the bonds has to convince a great many investors of creditworthiness. Furthermore, a bond issue is a good opportunity for the issuer to advertise how consistent and reliable the concepts behind the economic policy are.

The success of the National Bank on the international bond market can be better appreciated in the light of the fact that it is the only central bank in the East European region with a reputation of being an "active and accepted" player on the bond market.

It is also true, however, that Hungary is one of the countries most in need of external financing (second perhaps only to Poland in this region), because it has to service an external debt of $20.25 billion. This is the largest per capita

firms are surveying the ground in Hungary these days, but that is practically all that they are doing for the time being.

Since the downward trends of the economy are much more easy to trace statistically than upward ones, many people may feel that "there are certain achievements" although they cannot find positive proof in figures, and a close-up picture of the near future is more blurred than ever.

The slogan of the Kupa programme for 1991 is "restructuring and privatization" and, for 1992, "anti-inflation and convertibility". But the heavily loaded train of the reform of public finances is still being held up in the government's shunting yard. And it is becoming increasingly evident that privatization is held

foreign debt in Eastern Europe, even if it has shrunk this past year by a few hundred million dollars.

It is not surprising then that debt management and a desperate struggle against a runaway current account deficit is what every government for the last five years has had to concentrate on in their economic policies. For several years now every other dollar earned by exports has gone towards debt repayment.

The annual debt service burden of $2.7 billion capital and $1.5 billion interest makes it almost impossible for Hungary to use any of the external financing to boost her economy. It is regarded as an extraordinary achievement if no funds have to be drained from the economy to service the debt. Thus it has been all the more gratifying to read recently that the inflow of foreign capital probably is close to $1 billion so far this year, considerably easing Hungary's debt service pressure.

Nor is it surprising, in view of the situation, that some economists, both in Hungary and abroad, suggest that Hungary should ask for some kind of debt relief or even for rescheduling some of its debts.

The Polish example is remarkable in this respect. If a country with a seriously ailing economy, unable to pay its debts, was able to appeal to the good intentions of its creditors, Hungary's considerably reformed and largely manageable economy can feel justified in expecting similar treatment.

But those in charge of Hungary's economy have always firmly rejected even the mention of rescheduling. They argue that there is no direct evidence showing that a country forced to resort to asking for debt cancelling or rescheduling has actually seen much benefit from such a move, just to the contrary. It is widely believed here that even the smallest hint that Hungary does not want to, or is not able to, service its debts, would scare off potential creditors and investors, and the avenues leading to foreign credit would be closed to the National Bank. An equally serious consequence would be panic among the holders of what now is almost $1.5 billion worth of individual hard currency accounts. In addition, there would be serious consequences for the financing of imports.

A senior official of the National Bank of Hungary, Werner Riecke, thinks it impossible to ignore the old truth that what has been borrowed, has to be repayed.

back not so much by the lack of capital and by state bureaucracy, than by the simple everyday fact that the decrepit and heavily indebted firms are nothing for prospective investors to crave for.

In the absence of a reform of the financing of the pension, housing, health and education systems, state expenditure will not be smaller next year than this year. This will be aggravated by a projected 11 per cent unemployment rate, compared to 5 per cent at the moment and 8 per cent forecast for the end of 1991. The Economic Research Institute calculates that the deficit in public finances may be around 150 billion forints, while the 1992 state budget deficit forecast is 70 billion forints, which takes into account 20 billion forints income from privati-

The Kupa programme

To create the conditions for a market economy tempered by a welfare safety net is the clear goal of the four-year Hungarian economic programme presented by Finance Minister Mihály Kupa. The programme is based on a three-year agreement with the International Monetary Fund, signed at the end of 1990 and made public in March 1991.

Stabilization and Convertibility, the clear and concise document which reflects a liberal approach, separately lists the duties of parliament and the government. The idea is to lift the economy out of recession and set it on a growth course. The programme describes the principal features of economic policy at any given period and generally offers clear guidelines.

Top priority is given to changes in ownership and to reducing state ownership of property. In order to speed up the privatization process, the State Property Agency must become more efficient and the process ought to be decentralized. The document stresses the role of foreign capital in privatization and the importance of a gradual liberalization of the rules relating to the acquisition of property by non-Hungarian citizens. The importance of stepping up competition and of a continued freeing of prices, wages, exports and imports is stressed, as is the importance of modernizing the legal and economic conditions under which competition can unfold, including new accounting, taxation, depreciation rules, a modernized system of tariffs and foreign exchange and the inclusion of environment protection among the conditions set for competition.

The programme anticipates a rise in unemployment and a widening gap between the standards of living of various sections of the population as unavoidable concomitants of the restructuring of the economy, and warns that the state's role as a supplier of a welfare safety net will be moderated. Kupa's programme envisages a new social security system and assigns an important role to welfare services run by the churches and other non-profit organizations. In the first two years of the four-year period, the programme assigns absolute priority to combatting inflation. This includes a restrained budgetary and monetary policy, a reform of public finances, an appropriate exchange rate policy, a liberal import policy, and stimulation of personal savings. These measures, however, may not affect the country's service of its external debt. The programme pronounces that "the government rejects all manifestations urging partial debt relief, rescheduling or easing of interest payment obligation."

zation. But even if the money flowed in, it should not be included with current revenues if the original principles are consistently adhered to.

In view of this large budget deficit it seems incredibly optimistic on the part of the government to predict an inflation figure only slightly in excess of 20 per cent for next year. Originally, this forecast was predicated on an economic

Not even efforts to make the forint convertible are to risk the financing of the current account. Despite these tough conditions, the programme considers it a perfectly realistic aim to make the forint convertible by 1993.

The diminishing redistributive role of the state budget will be the measure of the shrinking of the state's role. The aim is to considerably reduce the current 64 per cent share the state budget has of the GDP. This will obviously make it possible to ease the tax burden. But this presupposes, besides the reduction of state subsidies to firms and consumers, a more formidable change: a radical reform of the pension, housing, healthcare and education systems.

The government programme assigns a growing role to monetary policy. There will be fewer central bank loans available for the direct financing of state spending; commercial banks will be more independent and the role of open market transactions will grow. If the banking sector is to come of age, privatization must cover the banks too. The programme naturally devotes a special secion to foreign economic strategy. The most important elements of this are that Hungary is to sign an association agreement with the European Community (so signed in November 1991), and there will also be a free trade agreement with EFTA.

Taxes, duties, levies, standards, quality tests and rules of competition will gradually be harmonized with the West European ones. The document stresses that it is vital for Hungary to retain the East European and the old Soviet markets.

The programme calls 1991 the year of restructuring and privatization, 1992 thee year of anti-inflationary measures and convertibility, 1993 the year of stability and modest growth, and 1994 the year of growth and adjustment to Europe. The programme proposes to create the institutional and legal system of a market economy by high-speed legislation over the first two years.

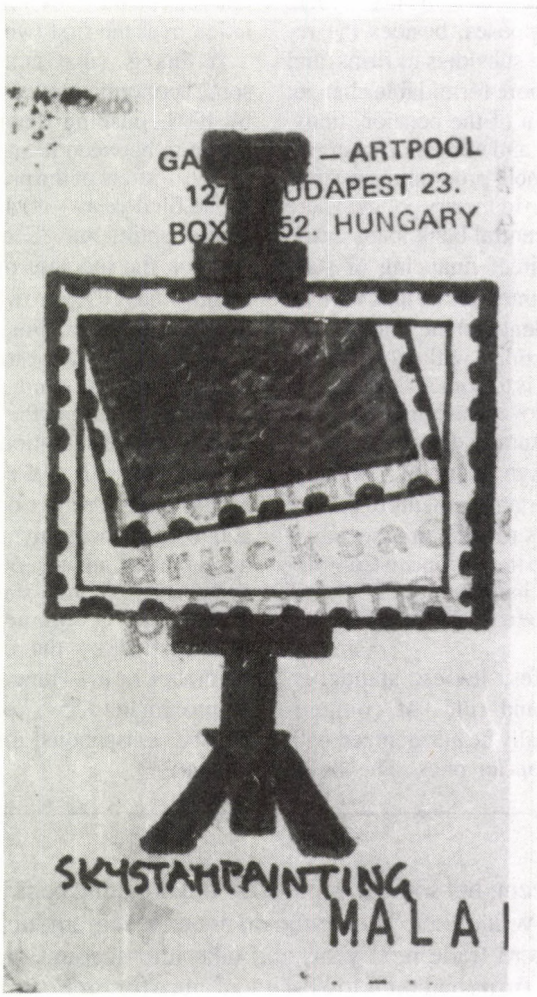
If this is what actually happens, some economic growth may be evident by 1993, pushing down the inflation figure to between 10 and 15 per cent.

The drafters of the programme speak of the final year— 1994—with considerable optimism: "Economic growth rests on the increase of domestic demand, and GDP growth may consequently stabilize. For the first time since the 1970s, domestic consumption may grow at the same rate as production without putting the balance at risk. Individual consumption may similarly grow. This will make it possible to reduce inflation to a one-digit figure, and to keep unemployment at the average level of advanced market economies. By 1994 non-state-owned ventures with a commercial orientation shaped by the market will be dominant in the Hungarian economy. Approximately 55-57 per cent of GDP will be redistributed through the state budget."

growth of 3 per cent, but somehow the GDP did not quite behave the way it was supposed to this year either. Those who do not expect dramatic improvement in Eastern or Western trade next year, and take into account the fact that Hungarian industrial firms had their lowest ever figure for orders in mid-September, will agree that such a low inflation rate is attainable only at the cost of soaring

unemployment and a widening gap between the standards of living of various sections of the population.

Finance Minister Kupa must have come to the same conclusion recently when he argued for some increase in unemployment "rather than runaway inflation". It cannot be seen at this stage how Hungarians who have willy-nilly learned to put up with inflation but who have not experienced massive unemployment for half a century, will react to the new situation.



Robin Crozier, Great Britain

Tibor Vámos

Abacus and ICBM

At first the model known as the Soviet system seemed to be viable; indeed, in certain interpretations, it seemed to be the very model of a rational modern economy. This predictability and, as a consequence, the hope of possible control, made it plausible that subjective elements could be eliminated from the economy and society. The paradigm of the machine was present in the philosophy and the arts that were proclaiming a new age. Friedrich von Hayek was perhaps the first to point out through rigorous reasoning the misleading character of the model; I myself demonstrated this through system science arguments.

As I see it, this model is marked by two particularly striking features. One is its goal; a 20th century version of the Messianic belief in the victory of the Good in Man over being governed by material, and power stimuli—all felt to be bad. The other feature of the model, once it is functioning, is that it turns into the worst of its own possible opposites. The belief in the predictability of everything considers all spontaneous organic forms, unrelated to the artificial superstructure as evil; it constructs an arbitrary monolith for reality. So the model governs everything and enforces an economic, social and political totality. Here it is the technological aspect that will be dealt with, that which ideology considered the substructure or, rather, the basis of the substructure, and which, for very good reasons, was the first to appear in the debacle. What is to be discussed is why the model at first seemed to be practicable, and why later it shattered the whole edifice which was supposed to rest on it for ever, moulded in iron and cement.

The first five-year-plan periods appeared to produce spectacular success: modern heavy industry in a previously backward country, imposing production figures, followed by an amazingly rapid relocation and restart of industry during the war, the achieving of considerable quantitative superiority in military equipment, in some cases even coupled with a technical superiority, and finally, in the 1950s, the signal successes in rocketry, civil aircraft and nuclear energy.

By the 1970s the technical lag had become evident: the first signs appeared in electronics and computers. Its extent—at first referred to as a crack and later seen as a chasm—grew quickly and the devastating effects revealed all the weaknesses and dead-ends which the successes and sham results of the previous period had more or less hidden. By the 1980s the system had become incapable of functioning; shortages had become customary and had reached unbearable proportions; technical catastrophes (Chernobyl, gas pipeline explosions, and many others) had shaken the country, not to mention the world. Oil production declined and the Soviet Union found itself more and more at the mercy of others in a new international technical environment.

The German Democratic Republic illuminated even more brightly the fatal flaws of the model. Once this had been one of the

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regions which had led the industrial revolution: the overwhelming majority of the German optical, much of the precision-engineering and chemical industries (e.g., Zeiss-Jena, Agfa-Wolfen), a large proportion of the printing industry (Leipzig) and half of the machine-tool industry were all located there. Everywhere else, electronics and high-precision automated production had developed out of these. The technological failure of the GDR had become clear, even to people unfamiliar with the technical details, now that it has turned out that they have no high tech products whatever that can be marketed within the new integrated German market.

A centralized, hierarchically organized system with a monolithic ideology and based on direct coercion is able to give a semblance of success in solving simpler tasks. But its rigid pseudo-rationality, its lack of feedback, mean that it can do even that only temporarily, by means of horrendous sacrifices and the exploitation of resources required for later development, indeed, survival. In the long run, this rigid system inevitably collapses. The noncomputability of high complexity and its contradictory dynamic development processes put a natural limit to any ideological wishful thinking.

Let us now move on to the determinants of the ongoing technical revolution, and which the model called the Soviet system has been unable to cope with.

I have taken three main characteristics for this (in fact organically connected) process of modification:

— precision;

— complexity in equipment and systems;

— complexity in the division of labour.

Precision is perhaps the first graspable and even measurable feature of the means which are transforming our world. The main data of electronic circuits are given in microns or fragments of microns; this defines the functional complexity of the circuit, its capacity for storage and processing speed. The struggle is now going on to achieve decimicron precision. Microns and fractional microns are the hallmarks of processing technologies, of the accuracy of machine-tools; they hold the secret of diminishing engine mileage and the growing reliability and endurance of equipment.

Another, general hallmark of fineness is the purity of a material employed. In technical language this is marked by the number of 9s, in percentage of purity, the amount of tenth, hundredth or millionth parts of contamination acceptable in a material. Science and technology have now reached the grade of 8 nines. All the characteristics of materials primarily depend on these grades of purity. Specific alloys are critically fine combinations of these finenesses.

Environmental purity is a similar quality. In the production of precision machines and materials and in high accuracy electronics, the permissible number of particles larger than 1 and 0.1 microns per unit volume in the environment, or the air in general, is of crucial importance. Such specifications of air purity are now valid in biology as well. Thus, for instance, the value of around 10 particles per cubic foot is a typical one. Just consider how many specks of dust settle upon a square foot of surface within a very short time even in pure, natural air!

Complexity, the juncture of problems, is also a striking feature of modern technology. Complexity appears even within a given component. The latest chips comprise more than a million earlier single components. The same is valid for all sophisticated modern equipment: a car has many thousands of parts, an aircraft many tens of thousands. According to an often quoted comment, the weight of the documentation of several technical products is equal to or even greater than their structural weight. This even holds true for an aircraft carrier.

Complexity has been growing even more forcefully in systems. The various technological or technology-based systems, such as air transport, energy networks, and most of all, telecommunication networks, operate with immensely complicated functional mechanisms. The software of a new electronic telephone system has several million instructions, while digital networks involve the cooperation of several hundreds of thousands of different computers, users, applications.

Complexity appears even more strikingly in production processes. These unite all the factors of complexity listed so far and considerably raise the requirements demanded in production. A device of low purity and crude measurements can be turned out by simple means; care has to be devoted only to the main processes and the rest can be neglected. Growing requirements usually do not involve a simple linear growth in conditions: the production of an instrument twice as small with a surface twice as fine and material twice as pure calls for not twice as many factors, but often for five or even ten times as many, in order to compensate precisely the minor side effects that previously could be neglected. There is a growing number of operations to be carried out; integrated circuits, for example, are made through more than a hundred processing steps. It is no longer possible to realize simple ideas; thousands of conditions must be met in order to arrive at a product which will be able to do everything it has been designed to do. A short while back a Hungarian factory decided to manufacture robots. They began by buying the best type available, took it to pieces and were quick to conclude that they would never have dreamt it would be so easy to copy. A few months later they were forced to admit that the cogwheels were of a hardness which they could not produce, indeed which they could not even measure. The accurate functioning of the robot depended (among other things) on this. Some twenty years ago, the Xerox company published two photographs of Khrushchev in all the trade papers, one done on their own machine and the other by a Soviet-made copier. The copy said that they were not afraid of these kind of clones. Indeed, all the technically more developed countries of the former Soviet empire (including Hungary) tried, at huge cost, to develop xerox-type machines; none ever succeeded in turning out anything acceptable, even though the basic principles can be found in all the relevant textbooks. There is no product of any reasonable standard that escaped a similar fate, including, it seems, the simplest, everyday personal belongings. Somewhere, at some clearly definable point, the qualitative standard barrier became unsurmountable, and the complexity of production conditions reached the limits of the abilities of the system (the technological, economic and social system all in one).

It must also be seen that, much earlier, some of these qualitative parameters could be achieved in individual, extremely exacting, artisan production. It should be stressed that this was only true of some of them, however, since these concern various everyday items, nostalgic recollection may distort a clear judgement. But this cannot be extended to mass production, though mass demand and the possibility of being able to meet this demand is one of the most important characteristics of our changing world. Suffice it to think of the motoring, television, household appliances and telecommunications explosions.

All this complexity is being brought about by man, who then tries to cope with this artificial, scarcely accessible world he himself created. Complexity is mainly evident in its human contexts. Knowledge and skills have been fragmented and completely new forms of cooperation are now demanded. Scien-

tists often cite an article in the *Physical Review* which was signed by 99 contributors. A new technical development is sometimes the outcome of the concerted work of many hundreds, possibly many thousands, of people. Coordination has also produced a new type of man, a specific blend of the manager and the scientist-technician, who himself no longer carries out a single specific working phase, but knows and is responsive to all the organizing strategies the duties of an orchestral conductor involve; he is sensitive to quality, has organizing skills and is able to identify, design and carry out various goals. In an earlier study I compared this mutation to the biological evolution of the nervous system: the protozoon had no need for a nervous system, nor did creatures of a low complexity, since the cells carried out autonomously all that is necessary for life. They could communicate by simple chemical and electronic means without any separate functional organs. The first phase followed this biological analogy: there came about large, permanent, hierarchically built and functionally fixed, divided organizations. This solution appeared to coincide with the organizational form and conceptual and implementational conformation envisaged by the Leninist-Stalinist organizational design, created in the interests of a forced and aggressive modernization. Yet even at the time they lacked certain elements which ensure the day-to-day survival of biological systems: tremendous reserves of adaptivity (indeed, the system quickly used up all the apparently superfluous earlier reserves), and feedbacks, the huge fabric of horizontal relationships across the hierarchy, which—looked at as a system based on a primitive and agressive preconsideration—seemed not only superfluous but harmful, disturbing and unsettling. This also shows that an artificially focused system ignores real life. From the point of view of survival it was thus condemned to death from the start. This makes the contradiction or, rather, the logical link, between temporary sham success and the collapse more understandable.

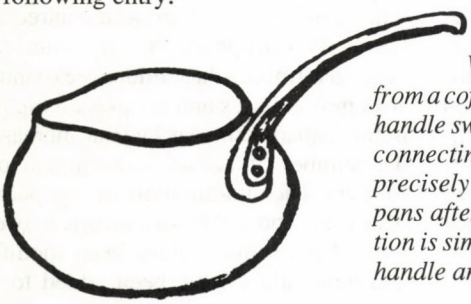
This is not the end of the story, which indeed just starts at this point. The biological unit realizes its adaptability by calling on its inner reserves, but such a unit has basically adapted itself to what are largely permanent conditions and it carries out constant functions. This constancy sometimes sparks off responses that seem comical to us, to the utter delight of both the observing child and the learned ethologist. For really great changes and varied objectives, nature adapts itself by the cruel mechanism of birth and destruction, the birth and death of both individual and species. Arising from the cruel reality of individual lives and history, man's response is also similar, but he tries to use different, less "inhuman" means, too.

If we do not wish to impose — by killing human individuals or at least destroying their specific living conditions — adaption to changing objectives (by eschewing the mathematically verifiable non-compatibility of complexity, based on primitively simplistic and arbitrary schemes), we must make the connections between individuals and functions constantly alterable: the great hierarchical systems are broken up according to their objectives, into elements and individuals of the system, linked to given occasions. The coordination and organizational philosophy of these is naturally a much more complex task (once again complexity). All previous systems directed by humans function differently, using different means.

The technology concerned is given: the entire infrastructure of the informational society; we have returned in part to technology. But the human and organizational contexts are not given. One may point to a further example, the Gulf War. In the wars of the past—given otherwise nearly identical conditions —the army whose soldiers had been accustomed to harsher condi-

Copied from western designs

For Let's Design Things, a competition organized by the Academy of Applied Arts, eleven year old Gergely Borgulya from Pécs submitted the following entry:



When someone tries to pour coffee from a coffee pan, it is annoying to find that the handle swivels round because of a faulty joint connecting the handle and the pan. Still, this is precisely what happens with aluminum coffee pans after only a few weeks of use. The solution is simple: two bolts are needed to join the handle and the pan

EVALUATION OF THE ENTRY

The coffee pan, copied from western designs, has two parts, the pot and the handle, joined by a bolt. The pot is made of aluminum: a choice not easily explained by any consideration other than the low price of the material. The surface is slightly grooved, although the grooves are too shallow to help conceal the wearing of the material.

Compared to western designs, the indented spout of the Hungarian version is slightly deformed (1-2 mm), which is enough to cause spilling when coffee is poured from the pot. A rectangular dent on the pot serves to keep the handle in position; this is, however, not nearly deep enough, and when the bolt, made of a material too soft for the purpose, loosens, the handle begins to swivel.

In its shape, the handle resembles the original design: a small knob at the end gives the user a comfortable feeling and a secure grip. Near the joint, the handle becomes hollow, partly to keep production costs down by using less material, and partly to allow access for the bolt. Unfortunately, the handle is not made of a heat-resistant material (it is in fact exposed to direct heat), which makes it open up like a cauliflower, crumble and finally fall off.

The manufacture of this coffee pan amounts to a crime, since it does not even meet prescribed Hungarian standards. By disregarding vital elements of the original design, the engineers were, therefore, guilty of incompetence or indifference; equally responsible was the manager who allowed production to go ahead, and the authorities who permitted sale. There is more to it however, than the nuisance of such a small vessel (and it is that in spite of admitting that even a small object is capable of generating much ill-feeling when it is sold to hundreds of thousands of households): it symbolizes a social trap.

Unlike adults, eleven-year-old Gergely Borgulya is not angry; the coffee-pot and the world (another inferior design), together with the people running it, are to him facts of life. His reaction to the inconvenience caused by a faulty handle is simple and instinctive. Right now he is not concerned with the other deficiencies. The real value of his proposal—in addition to the trivial solution—lies in his dispassionate and constructive approach to the problem.

tions in civilian life proved superior, since they adapted themselves more easily to the hardships of war. Now the situation has changed: complex technical devices can be properly operated only by people who in civilian life too have been accustomed to the operation of complex devices that demand great precision, discipline, education and precise environmental conditions. People at different stages of civilization can operate the same device with completely different, indeed contrasting, efficiency. The wheel here, too, has come full circle: the myth of the possible coexistence of underdeveloped Soviet civilian technology and competitive Soviet military technology has proved hollow. The true situation has become evident: a lower level of military technology in the hands of people at a lower stage of civilization was the secret of a third world war that has never been fought! (Not being a military historian, I only wish to stress the clear lesson of the close relationship between a highly developed technology and a highly developed human technical civilization.)

Those who argue for centralized directives often refer to the success of the closed societies of the Far East. The work ethic of the region is rooted in millennial traditions and has developed within a system of social relations utterly different from ours; their success cannot be repeated here. But when the historically most favourable conditions for borrowing a technology give way to the necessity of independent development and the creation of individual results, traditional structures undergo rapid disintegration, and there emerges a democratic, Western type demand for the cultivation and harmonization of individual values.

The modification of conditions and needs now becomes discernable: huge global systems, hardly accessible in their complexity, with their equally complex elements and functioning conditions in permanent motion at a stage of adaptable change, trying out new situations. The immense net of interrelations cannot tolerate the rigidity of permanence; and so we live in a rapidly changing world which demands much greater mobility. Even the physical frontiers of this system are in motion: the old and limited world the white man—with its European-centred and, later, its European, North American-centred formula—has suddenly expanded, with new cultures and peoples taking part in this expansion, year by year increasing the number of active, independent performers. The hitherto more or less permanent roles and interrelationships between the old performers have been modified and new values have been added to the existing ones.

In contrast, and side by side with the tremendous standardizing effect of (industrial and cultural) mass production, individual and minor units are faced with a special demand: they can only survive by acting out their own specific roles, as the traditional, inherited (and thus routine) roles no longer suffice. This individualization has been encouraged through the many different paths created by technology, growing standards of living, more leisure and a higher life expectancy, and diminishing in the physical burdens that exhaust all human energies. The traditional, closed world is opening up and it is this opening up which is needed for the modification of technology and of how the world is organized.

This is how highly flexible societies, coming together for a given purpose, are forming, selecting, more or less freely, companions momentarily most suitable for co-operation. This is how giant enterprises and organizations—provided they are healthy— break up into autonomous sections, while maintaining their large frames, in a drastically changed form. This is how the philosophy of work and direction based on the Taylor system becomes modified into the typical, anthropocentric style of modern management, seeking out and harmonizing individual values. This is how

participation once again is an effective means to reaching a goal, a method of identification with the assignment.

The systemized doctrines of the Soviet empire never even grasped this. Since hundred-year-old schemes of industrialization were followed in the process of modernization, so, too, the methods and mentality of management and organization rigidly adhered to outdated schemes, to which were added even older (Mongol, Czarist, medieval church) inheritances. So the international development of technology and the conditions required for it made collapse inevitable; the backslide has accelerated in proportion with the widening of the gulf between the more freely developing world and this petrified formation.

I have discussed a model (and this entails some basic and typical features) without penetrating into the complexities of concrete analysis. It is only natural that the individual cases in which the model was implemented cannot be treated as equal, as there were tremendous differences between Hungarian, Polish and East German conditions, or those in North Korea, Rumania or Albania. Even within the Soviet Union, the picture was a varied one, and this is without considering modifications in time. Yet history passed a uniform sentence on the model as such. The domino effect, the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and the Gorbachev reform gave an impetus to the process, and there is a close relationship between the cause that appears on the surface and the consequence. But it can be safely said that where the situation developed somewhat more favourably—e.g. in Hungary—the more favourable situation was a result of a partial rejection of the model.

It is now merely speculation whether, if the Soviet empire had managed to totter on for another ten or twenty years, the former Hungarian system would have been able to divest itself of the basic limitations of a model that was considered untouchable, out of its own inner decision and reform force.

The reader will inevitably come to the conclusion that the picture drawn here about the present development trends of the modern world, this progress towards an anthropocentric approach, is far too optimistic, and many examples can be provided to the contrary. The transition in Eastern Europe suggests a restoration of the law of the jungle. Another frightful indication is that those countries that have progressed furthest are being forced to rein in their social and cultural development. The market, having taken on global proportions, swings the current political pendulum towards a utilitarian, short-term social Darwinism. No verifiable hypotheses of future trends exist; what happened recently is additional evidence for this. Dynamic systems usually approach their necessary states through oscillation. But as the Soviet system has necessarily led to a dead-end (as could be clearly deduced from technological necessity), the view of the world now taking shape and rendered possible and necessary by the technology of today and tomorrow, can be deduced from developing technologies. And this is an anthropocentric, cooperative society with a high grade of freedom, based on information, and giving priority to the quality of life, thought, discussion and striving to reach consensus. Its hard, self-seeking, painful coming into existence and its nature, compromising by its very essence, also shows that, *pace* Fukuyama, history will end neither today nor tomorrow, the difference exists "only" in the quality of the answers to the given conditions of the given period. But it is this "only" that determines the lives of millions, living under the given conditions of the given period.

Árpád Tőzsér

Requiem and Te Deum for a Capital City

A separate article was inserted in the first constitution of socialist Czechoslovakia (there had been three by the end of 1968), prohibiting the propagation of the "Central-European idea" and proscribing any organization that promulgated it. That this particular article was not to be taken lightly can be easily perceived in Lubomir Feldek's novel, *Van Stiphout,* in which he describes how his own father had been jailed in the mid '50s for doing just that: propagating the Central-European idea.

By 1968 things had changed both in Prague and in Pozsony (Bratislava-Pressburg) to the extent that the terms "Central Europe" and, naturally "Europe" had literally become fashionable—and the first constitution naturally went out of fashion. I recall reading a serious piece of the time, in which the author used complicated trigonometric arguments to show that a correctly drawn pair of diagonals of the trapezoid of Europe intersected precisely at Pozsony. Thus Bratislava was at the centre of Europe and the implication was that no city could be the capital of Central Europe other than Bratislava. One cannot tell whether, if that second Battle of the White Mountain had not occurred in 1968 and the Soviet Union with four of its loyal satellites had not shifted Pozsony from the centre of Europe to the western fringe of the Soviet Empire, a Central-European Parliament would not now be meeting there.

As a direct consequence of the revolutionary events of 1989, the Central-European identity of Pozsony has once again revived. So too have memories of the Pressburg and Pozsony of old. As recently as 1985, every reference to its pre-socialist history had to be omitted from an exhibition of paintings marking the "fortieth anniversary of the liberation of the Slovak capital", as being ideologically damaging. Yet, the first visible sign of the 1989 "gentle revolution" here was a poster, "Retroslava"; as well as the pun on the city's Slovak name, both the German and the Hungarian names of the city were featured in huge letters and almost the entire history of Pozsony was covered by a montage of old picture postcards. In the two years since this poster, numerous other functions were arranged in this "Retroslava" spirit. I shall only mention two of the most recent.

Árpád Tőzsér *is a poet, essayist and translator who lives in Pozsony.*

The anniversary last year of Maria Theresa's crowning as "King" of Hungary 250 years ago was celebrated with almost as much pomp as the coronation itself; the principal difference was that the anniversary was pure theatre, performed mainly by young people. On June 22, 1991, under the patronage of the Mayor of Pozsony, a coronation procession in period costume paraded along the very route that had been used 250 years ago. They would have gone on to the Coronation Mound on the Danube bank, had it not been for two serious problems. (A newly crowned King of Hungary rode up to the top of this mound and made a cut with his sword to the north, south, east and west.)

The first of the problems is that Coronation Mound no longer exists; in its place broods a statue of Ludovit Stur, the nineteenth century Slovak national hero.

The second problem was of a moral nature. Up to 1921 the mounted Maria Theresa stood where Stur stands now, the same Maria Theresa celebrated by the present procession. Those taking part must have had mixed feelings looking at the place once occupied by the Coronation Mound and the statue of Maria Theresa.

The other event, intended to reclaim Pozsony's historical past, is merely an interesting series of newspaper articles. These demanded the restoration of the Váralja district, indeed its rebuilding. Its systematic destruction had started with the 1921 removal and demolition of Maria Theresa's statue and had gone on for seventy years.

Articles are being published concurrently in a number of newspapers; the most interesting, as far as I am concerned, was published by Ján Koci and Pavel Dvorák, in the June 27, 1991 issue of the daily *Národná Obroda,* under the heading "Tvár mesta" (The face of the town).

One of the authors, Ján Koci, is a well-known Vienna architect. Koci, a former resident of Pozsony, fled to the west in 1957 and returned home recently. This is how he described his homecoming: "I returned to a city systematically and utterly destroyed... The 'work' I found here would have done credit to Ceausescu...". Most interesting of all was his outline of a large-scale rehabilitation plan for Pozsony, a plan which had already been submitted to the town councillors.

The plan takes your breath away in many of its details though it seems feasible on the whole. Thus the Insurrection Bridge (this megalomaniac project) becomes a simple footbridge; the northern section of the bridge (near the Old Town) is split in two lengthwise and turns left and right immediately before reaching the Danube bank. Thus Váralja would not only be spared large and elaborate bridge construction, with all its pillars and approach roads taking up a lot of room, but also noisy international traffic that is altogether out of place in a city centre.

Pozsony, at the centre of Central Europe, may therefore still hope to become the capital of the region, of which at the moment it is only at the centre. Indeed, in the days of Habsburg Central Europe, Pozsony, the sister city of Vienna, was well on the way to such a role. Apart from the proximity of Vienna, the geographical feature that the north-south and the east-west diagonals do indeed

A city of three names

The city is now known by three names. The German Pressburg derives from a 9th century Slav knight named Braslav, whose castle it was. The 19th century Slovak scholar Safarik mistakenly presumed Braslav's name to have been Bratislav and hence created Bratislava which, in 1920, officially replaced the Slovak vernacular Presporok. The origins of the Hungarian name, Pozsony, go back to the 12th century. From the time the Hungarians first settled in the Danube valley, in the 9th and 10th centries, up to 1918, Pozsony was part of Hungary. Since 1918 Pozsony has been part of Czecho-Slovakia and is now the capital of Slovakia.

The surviving castle was an important part of the western defences of the country. Slavs settled at the foot of the hill, their settlements were later replaced by renaissance and baroque suburbs which were almost completely destroyed when the monstrous Danube bridge was built. This, from the end of the 16th century, was the Jewish district, in the 19th century, Jews accounting for more than 10 per cent of the city's population. The Old City, at a greater distance from the castle, was settled by Germans in the 13th century. Gothic churches, convents and monasteries, the town hall, and burgher houses that underwent much rebuilding, as well as a city tower, still evoke medieval Pozsony.

Up to the end of the 19th century, Germans dominated urban life, and they were still in a relative majority early in the twentieth century. Right up to the end of the 19th century Hungarians were few in numbers but the city played an all the more important part in Hungarian history and still looms large in Hungarian consciousness. In 1536, following the Turkish occupation of a third of Hungary, when the Kingdom of Hungary became part of the Habsburg Empire, and was mostly reduced, in the 16th and 17th centuries, to the teritory of present-day Slovakia, and western Transdanubia, Pozsony became the capital of the country for two and a half centuries. The Holy Crown of Saint Stephen was kept in the Castle, between 1563 and 1830 the kings of Hungary of the House of Habsburg—with two exceptions but including Maria Theresa—were crowned there, in the city Parish Church, with other ceremonies to follow, in strict order, at various points in the city. The Estates of the country met in Pozsony right up to 1848. That is where, on the initiative of Kossuth and the liberals, legislation was passed in 1848, laying the foundations of bourgeois progress for all the citizens of this multinational country. (Handwritten reports circulated of the debates of the Hungarian Estates during the Metternich censorship. Sándor Petőfi, the poet, for some time earned

intersect here, and that it is here that the three defining ethnic groups of Central Europe (the Slavs, the Germans and the Hungarians) meet also set it on this course. Apparently, it is this historical Pressburg-Pozsony-Bratislava that the new masters of Pozsony want to rebuild. And provided that, in addition to architectural memories, they

his living as a scribe producing such reports.)

Pozsony was also a cultural centre, the home of numerous schools and colleges. The first newspapers, in the 18th century, in German, Hungarian and Slovak, were published there. Public buildings, the palaces of magnates and of the Roman Catholic Prince Primate, more modest replicas of Viennese models, some surrounded by huge parks, recall this period.

The importance of Pozsony, which somewhat declined in the closing years of the Habsburg empire and of Hungarian rule, steeply rose in 1918. Since then the city has been part of Czecho-Slovakia and the capital of Slovakia, at first only nominally, then actually, between 1939 and 1945, at the time of the sovereign fascist Slovak state, and again since 1968. The population had quintupled in eighty years and now stands at around 400,000. Lately, particularly in the last fifty years, Pozsony has become a Slovak town. The Jewish community was destroyed during the war, the Germans practically disappeared after 1945, and the Hungarians only account for a fragment. Pozsony was one of the most important scenes of the Slovak national revival, which started in the 18th century, and has thus been a Slovak cultural and political

Much of old Pozsony has fallen victim to that forced industrialization and urbanization which was the hallmark of communism everywhere in Eastern Europe. This was accelerated by the new Slovak nation's desire for a capital of metropolitan proportions and further facilitated by the elimination, since 1939, of those people who for centuries had lived in the city and determined its character. First the Jews were destroyed, then all the Germans and some Hungarians were expelled, finally burghers regardless of race or creed were suppressed. The process of rediscovery of the old Pozsony only started a year or two ago.

Gábor Pajkossy

The percentage distribution of the population between 1852 and 1930

	Germans	Hungarians	Slovaks
1852	84	6	10
1880	66	16	11
1890	60	20	16
1900	52	31	15
1910	42	41	15
1921	29	21	46
1930	28	16	51

also succeed in reviving the spirit of this city of three names and three languages, along with that "inter-national" Central-European culture which long ago fed on these three languages and national identities, then Pozsony would, indeed, be the ideal location for a future Central-European Parliament.

Much soul-searching is needed, however, before that spirit and culture are revived and rehabilitated; a great many people will have to account for their past. I would very much like to hear the present opinion of the historian Branislav Varsik, for example, on the subject of the removal and destruction of the Maria Theresa statue in 1921. Even as recently as his 1987 book, this eminent Slovak historian boasted of how he, as a student, had taken part in the removal of that very statue: "... I, too, joined the agitated crowd, and helped to pull the thick rope attached to the Empress and her horse."

By a curious coincidence, I happened to be a resident of Váralja between 1960 and 1965, the period during which the vandal attacks on Pozsony culminated, leaving, in the end, only a few of the old buildings standing. I am looking at Koci's suggested reconstructions. I find Hal-tér (Fish Square), named after the fish market held there in medieval times, looking almost exactly as it did before it was demolished. Vödric utca runs into it at an angle so familiar to me; with minor interruptions, I lived at number 5 Vödric utca for nearly five years.

In our last year there we could stay in the half demolished building only at our own risk; we were lodgers and young, we had nowhere else to go. As a consequence, I watched the oldest part of Pozsony disappearing from the face of the earth quite literally from my bedroom window. Not only did I see it, but also apprehended it through all my senses, and that included feeling it in my guts. Day and night we were subjected to the noise of bulldozers, heavy trucks and pneumatic drills; by morning we often found that the constant tremors had shifted our bed inches from the place where it had stood when we got into it.

I also witnessed the demolition of the building at number 46 Vödric utca; a building also mentioned in Koci's article. The plumbing of the house was designed, patented and installed by Farkas Kempelen, the late 18th century Hungarian inventor, who created the famous chess automaton. From my first-floor window I could see "the weathered hut on the Castle steps" where the Hungarian poet Sándor Petőfi and his friend József Kolmár scribbled their parliamentary reports "day in and day out", for a payment of "twenty groats." (The quotes are taken from the best of sources, József Kolmár himself.) Ján Koci even has reason to believe that, concealed under coats of plaster, one of Petőfi's poems had been written on the wall in the poet's own handwriting—until the building was pulled down.

The most shocking experience of all was the demolition of the Hal-tér Synagogue. The Oriental-style building, covered with colourful mosaics and looking remarkably undamaged from the outside, was simply blown up, just like a military target in wartime. In collapsing, the mysterious twin-towered building of Orphic elegance still retained a measure of grace, giving the impression that, unlike its walls which can be destroyed, its 'circles' (*circulos meos*) cannot be disturbed; the task, the historic mission will survive destruction and will be taken up by others. It was at that moment that I realized that there was a

war going on here: a bitter struggle against something these old buildings stood for. The only thing that remained for me to do was to discover what that something was precisely.

I have fond memories of an attractive building in Hosszú utca, all but a step from the Synagogue. (This building is still standing, I am very pleased to add.) I often paused briefly in front of it just to smile. Over the gate, at first-floor level, there was a naked gnome sarcastically surveying passers by from a niche of the shape and size of a shoebox. The contrast between the classical line of the house and the leering little gnome with his slack penis had the same effect on me as would, say, an unexpected guffaw from a bearded old gentleman reading a respectable folio; it allowed a glimpse of the architect's personality (or of the house-owner's eccentricity). During my strolls, I usually saw these two buildings—the mysterious and solemn Synagogue and the burgher house bursting with suppressed laughter—as a pair; seeing these two architectural extremes side by side, I discovered that particular something which the centurions of socialism wanted to destroy with their bulldozers and steamrollers. That something was the privacy and security afforded by these buildings: for them it was still true that "my house is my castle".

On conquering another tribe, the ancient Incas first ousted the vanquished from their homes and moved them to new surroundings where the houses had no doors. The slaves were not allowed any privacy at all: they had to eat, wash and defecate in public. Presumably, the buildings of Váralja were too private for the liking of Pozsony's new socialist masters. Behind their thick walls, strong gates and doors it was still possible to lead a private life: to laugh and to cry, to think of ancestors who had built those walls and gates and to muse over old letters, birth certificates and books or to read the Torah in the Synagogue. The henchmen of the new ideal, who mostly did not understand the ideal at all, and consequently all the more the commands of the proconsuls of a foreign power, found sensual pleasure in pushing those evicted around, rehousing them in high-rise prefabricated blocks of flats with walls thin as paper and almost no doors at all. The aim was that citizens could be put under surveillance and that in their barren cells nothing should remind them of their former lives.

Perhaps I ought to end my recollections at this point. It would take us too far to follow up subjects such as government control over the private sphere and loss of identity. There is only one more thing I would like to recall. It was in 1969, immediately after the great demolition job, that I read István Domonkos's *A kitömött madár* (The Stuffed Bird). Or was it Ottó Tolnai's *Rovarház* (Insectarium)? It is about someone who, in a half-demolished small town somewhere in Yugoslavia, spends his time frantically trying to record in his notebook every word he sees on the sign-boards of shops, offices and cafes not yet pulled down. It was almost as if he was trying to save something for posterity. On occasions when I visited Váralja later and saw it razed to the ground, I often thought of that, feeling shame that I had failed to make an effort, even as humble as the one described in the book, to save something of the old town for myself.

Now it looks as if somebody had recorded all the necessary details. Some months ago, a mural showing the bygone buildings of Hal-tér and Vödric utca appeared on the pillars of the new Danube bridge towering over what used to be Hal-tér and Vödric utca. The mural, in coloured chalk, on the concrete walls of the pedestrian subway under the bridge, has stood up to bad weather; it constantly reminds the authorities that the Slovak National Insurrection Bridge is unable to fill the abyss created by the demolition of a whole district. Perhaps they will understand that nothing short of the recreation of the town's former appearance can fill that abyss.

The rehabilitation of this Central-European town, which is so dear to us, has thus been going on since 1989. Or is it possible that it began sooner but we did not have the courage to notice the earlier attempts? In the 1970s Lubomir Feldek, the poet mentioned earlier, whose father had been jailed during the 1950s for propagating the "Central-European idea", wrote a requiem for the destroyed (potential) capital of the "banned" Central Europe.

"We walk the streets like rollers / and flatten houses / We lay mines under history / and give new names to old places / Of all the riches of the town / we only treasure the snowdrop seller's curl / and the crowded bars / The Gothic coolly smiles on us..."

The first requiem for the town remained the only one for twenty years at least as far as Slovak literature was concerned. Hungarian writers also began writing their requiems late in the day. But now we write them in the hope that soon we shall also be singing a Te Deum in celebration of a resurrected, reconstructed Pressburg-Pozsony-Bratislava. We could sing it in that miraculous survivor, St Martin's of Váralja, smiling coolly as ever.

Ed Varney, Canada

József Barát

The Little Prince

"Amazing! You mean to say that your little Sophie stopped sucking her thumb in two days, all by herself?"

Her Imperial Highness beamed with an untarnished admiration.This was the Grandduchess Leonida Georgievna, née Muchranskaya Bagration, scion of the most ancient ruling family of Georgia, offspring of Kings Ashoth, David, and Iracly. To her family belonged Prince Pyotr Bagration, who died a hero's death as a general under Kutuzov, victor over Napoleon, and to whom there stands a monument in the fields at Borodino.

The admiration of the Grandduchess was understandable, since not everyone's daughter learns to stop sucking her thumb just like that, on her own, at the age of six. But mine did.

"Yes," continued Her Imperial Highness, "A child's strength of will is sometimes amazing. It was this way with our Goga also. As soon as he realized why the road which leads to our house in Saint Briac was called the Avenue of the Grandduke, all of a sudden his relationship to the Russian language, and to his studies, changed completely."

I paused a moment. Goga — that would be this little Czarevitch, His Imperial Highness Grandduke Georgy Michailovitch, now ten years of age and quite possibly one day to be the Czar of All the Russians. It struck me also that my daughter Sophie, descended on her mother's side from stubborn Calvinist petty nobles, farmers, and servants, and on her father's side from Jewish loggers, charcoal burners, tinsmiths, and again, servants (a shared tradition in the family), called to mind the great-grandson of Czar Alexander the Second and Queen Victoria.

I sat there staring into my coffee cup, which Her Imperial Highness misunderstood and said: "How inattentive of me! I had forgotten that you take your coffee with cream, but we've run out."

With this, the Grandduchess dashed out to the kitchen for some cream with an agility beyond her seventy-some years, while I must have been musing on the oddness of all these thoughts, since His Imperial Highness, the heir to the throne, Grandduke Vladimir Kirillovitch had also left the room. He was combing the apartment for the photograph of little Goga (His Imperial Highness, etc.), because he was obsessed by the thought that I could not return to Budapest

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József Barát *was Hungarian Radio's correspondent in Moscow.*

without his grandson's portrait. In a word, they behaved just like a non-imperial grandmother and grandfather who adore their grandchild.

These events took place in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-one, in the month of October, in the city of Paris, where my work with one of Budapest's cable television stations had taken me. Of course it is another story how, in possession of a personal invitation from the Grandduke I had to panhandle the price of the plane ticket from Hungarian Radio, from the journal *168 Hours,* and other national publications, until the cable station was finally ready to cough up. This is all just by way of saying that the crew was exceptionally tightfisted. The production director doubled up as cameraman and, while he was busy setting up the right shots for the interview, turning the apartment upside down setting up and taking down various lamps, and shoving the furniture around (now and again knocking it over with a crash), I chatted with our hosts for a good hour, over not one, but two cups of coffee, not to mention a glass of wine.

It turns out that Vladimir Kirillovitch, second cousin of the assassinated Czar Nicholas, often dreams of walking the streets of St Petersburg. (He can hardly be called the successor to the throne, since there is at present no throne; nor is he a pretender, since he is far from all such ambition, though he has spent his entire seventy-four years at the ready, should the need arise.) St Petersburg he knows from Dostoyevsky, of whom he is fond, in contrast to his feelings about the monarchist Solzhenitsyn, who somehow never appealed to him. Of course the head of the house of Romanov has never been to St Petersburg, though he was invited by the lawyer Sobchak, when he was still Mayor of Leningrad. The Grandduke has waited his entire life for this moment, yet now things do not seem quite right; he is reluctant to fuel the chaos. Perhaps someday, if he is invited by Gorbatchev, or Yeltsin, or — best of all — the Supreme Soviet. "Plenty of- time," declares, with royal tranquillity, the gentleman of seventy-four years, mildly afflicted with Parkinson's disease.

I have never had a stranger conversation than this, nor a finer one. The potential Czar of all the Russians somewhat roguishly pronounced, over his glass of mineral water (he drank neither wine nor coffee) that he is a liberal democrat, passionately devoted to the rights of the citizens—but that the surest guarantee of such freedoms in the Russia of today would be a Czar who espoused the principles of Juan Carlos of Spain. The politicians, and the ferocious jostling among the potential leaders, would open the door to dictatorship. A Czar, unlike a dictator, has no need for a personality cult.

The Grandduke—who speaks five languages, Russian, French, English, German, and Spanish— also expressed his fascination with a young prince who had recently arrived from Russia, a film director, one of whose excellent comedies he had seen. His Imperial Highness showed me a photograph of the two of them together. In the photograph Nikita Michalkov, every Russian woman's heartthrob (who lately has squandered his fabulous talents on lesser projects), exerts his usual charm. This was the man whose brother, a certain Konchalovsky,

went off to Hollywood, leaving about twenty pounds of Soviet decorations at home; his father had written the Soviet anthem. Nikita must have had a good laugh telling that one. His Highness appreciated my suggestion that he must see the young Prince's earlier films, two masterpieces. He calligraphed their titles on a sheet of paper in the polished letters of the days before the language reform, using the now obsolete hard marks: *Etudes for Player Piano. Five Evenings.*

Strange threads run through the mesh of culture and history. The word is that the only reason Kirill Vladimirovich, Vladimir's father managed to escape during that autumn in St Petersburg was that he himself raised the red flag at his palace. And another Prince wrote the Soviet anthem.

Leonida Georgievna Bagration-Romanova, scion of the Georgian royal family, proudly proclaimed that she had turned down invitations from Tbilisi. She was the wife of the Crown Prince of Russia, and that entails obligations. Perhaps the family would have had a happier life as ordinary people, as Kusnetsovs or Smiths, each moving in his own direction, but it is too late for all that: their fate is linked to Russia's. Somehow it happens that her favourite author is Gorky, the father of socialist realism. Her Imperial Highness only left the Soviet Union in 1933, in the shadow of the camps, with the help of Gorky, who sent the royal family to Chaliapin in Italy. But what she did not tell me over coffee was why the author of *Mother* would feel the need for someone of the Georgian princely family to survive to tell the tale. The Princess' grandmother had a washerwoman whose life was troubled because of her husband, a drunken cobbler. Perhaps he beat her, perhaps not, but she had a string of miscarriages. Finally, later, the Lord gave her a child, and she pledged to the Almighty that henceforth she would keep all the Commandments, wean her husband off the bottle, and, if the child survived, she would give him to the Church. The elderly Princess encouraged her servant to steer her lively boy towards some manual occupation, but the woman was firm in her resolve. The child became a handsome, fresh-faced young man, but dropped out of the seminary. His name was Josef Vissarionovitch Dzugashvili; but the world knew the son of the washerwoman and the drunkard cobbler as Stalin. It was perhaps in memory of his mother that he granted Gorky's request that the Bagration family — and with them, the little girl who was to become the wife of the heir to the Russian throne, and grandmother of the little Czarevitch—be allowed out of the country. Strange threads indeed weave through the fabric of history.

More than an hour had passed with our conversation and filming when Mishka, the snow-white, long-haired dog of royal mien stood up before me and gazed at me most reproachfully. I did not know what he disapproved of: was it that we had turned the place upside down, or that we had worn out his master, or maybe that I had enveloped the living room in my pipe smoke? He informed us that our time was up. While we were packing our things, I managed to talk the Czarina-babushka out of giving us some biscuits for the road, and I mused on the parting words of the Crown Prince, expressing his envy for me that I had lived in Russia for ten years. No man alive—you can be sure of that—has ever before envied me for this.

György Galántai

Pooling the Arts

The Artpool Art Research Centre

The embryonic form of the Artpool Archives was the "First Archive," which consisted of four parts, begun in 1971 at Balatonboglár. The first was a large folder in which I displayed, attached to a series of boards, documents pertaining to the Chapel Studio at Balatonboglár: newspaper clippings, reproductions, and works left there by the artists. The second part of the exhibition consisted of those materials which later became the Slide Bank. I made archival slides of all the works at Balatonboglár with an Exa camera and a lens of normal focal length. The third part is a diary, and the fourth, a collection of exchanges by letter, filed accordingly (Police, Bureau of Health, Fire Department, etc.).

In 1978, I had an exhibition at the Fészek Club in Budapest in which I showed books made of copper and imprints of them created with a spray gun. András Bán wrote an accompanying text, though he did not wish to read it aloud. At that time, the American Neo-Dadaist Anna Banana was in Budapest, and she read the text out, though she understood not a word of it—that was the Dadaist touch. The imprints of the books bore as much resemblance to their original as the text read by Banana to the original Hungarian.

I began Artpool with the photographs and catalogue prepared at that time, sending copies of the catalogue to all the addresses I had accumulated over the years. Among these addresses were not only mail-artists, but a much larger circle of artists. Surprisingly many—about half—of some 300 people answered my mailing. Thus began the assembling of the archive. At first all the materials fitted on one chair, with each artist in a separate folder, then I dedicated a shelf to them. This all happened quite spontaneously, without any particular planning. One cannot, after all, plan the unknown.

The first activity of the archive which was actually planned was the participation in an English Mail Art exhibition entitled "Poste Restante," organized by Michael Scott, an established mail artist. It consisted of mailings sent to one another by the participants. It was for this exhibition that I created the first Artpool postcards, which I sent to everyone whose name was on the invitation to the show. I sent these cards, some 500 in number, as a package to Scott, who put them on show, then sent them on to their addressees,

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On March 24, 1992, the Artpool Art Research Centre opened in Budapest. (Open Wednesday and Fridays, between 2 and 6 p.m.). Through it, the Hungarian art world now has access to an alternative institution such as was to be found, in the past, only underground. Its founders are György Galántai and Júlia Klaniczay. Helga László interviewed György Galántai in December of 1991. This article contains excerpts from their conversation.

thus dispersing them around the world, and assuring Artpool of a place in the network. As a result of this, the archive really took wing, as more and more materials began arriving. Nearly everyone responded to my cards in one way or another.

How many people respond depends on what you send; not all mailings get many answers. One has to send a "good" message about oneself. Hence participation in the mail art network demands creativity and an understanding of how, why, and where the process works, of what is its essence, and one must add to this something of one's own. If you can truly expand the genre, you will get the most responses.

The many responses were doubtless encouraged by the recipients' knowing few people in Eastern Europe. Fairly many Poles are active mail artists, though there are fewer Czechs and barely any Hungarians. Our only participants were the three "Tót"-s (Endre Tót, Gábor Tóth, and Árpád Fenyvesi Tóth), and none of the three was an organizer; I assumed this role. It was significant that we gave ourselves a name: "We are Artpool." At that time in Hungary, no one called themselves anything.

I have always felt the need, whenever I represent others in an exhibition and am not merely showing my own work, to find the show some kind of institutional sponsor, however fictive this may be. What is done institutionally requires an institutional name, hence in this case I am not György Galántai, but "Chapel Studio" or "Artpool." Institutions, albeit alternative ones, are characteristic of the alternative world as well, but there, the institution itself is the subject of the art. The Underground does not attack institutions, but rather forms its own.

The term "Artpool" refers to the act of collecting from diverse artistic spheres and endeavours. Its goal has always been, keeping pace with the events of the day, to collect and preserve the documents of international and Hungarian artistic movements, and bring to light new projects. As for mail art, it has never been my primary interest, though I am one of the most active mail artists in Hungary. Art itself is what interests me; mail art is interesting as a genre, as a form of correspondence art, as a fluid activity which brings about relationships between artists. I feel that communication is an indispensable element of art: a traditional statue or picture is also a tool for communication. This leads directly to mail art, whose network I exploit as one of art's possible forms.

The medium of the Artpool Archive was the postal service, a tool I considered suitable to keep me in contact with theentire world. We tried always to keep the Archive's activities within private circles. This was a more mobile mode of existence, and one less influenced by the authorities: it was a trench, a large underground fire base. Of course, nothing is truly private under a dictatorship—even your soul's inner corners are under observation.

Stepping out of private circles required some caution, since bringing my concepts to the larger society was problematic. As long as I worked with some restraint, there were no great difficulties, though I was supervised by the postal service. For example, it was less risky in those days to produce some publication, or book, than an exhibition. There was an international network newspaper by the name of "Commonpress," under the direction of the Pole Pavel Petasz, though each issue would be put out by a different artist. I produced issue 51, which dealt with Hungary. It could have been published without suppression had I produced a publication at my own expense, instead of organizing a public exhibition from it.

The Hungarian art world in the late seventies went through waves: from time to time something would begin to flower — for there were intelligent people working here, arranging activities and shows—but the authorities would quickly squelch them. People were beaten down and could

no longer work. Everyone reacted to this according to his own blood pressure: there were many who left, and many who acquiesced. There was such a "migration" at the end of the sixties, after the great rows occasioned by the Iparterv Exhibitions. During that time left, among others, Géza Perneczky, László Lakner, and Endre Tót, though there were some who stayed. It was then that I began to work at Balatonboglár, which still had some cover and kept the movement alive. Again after 1973, when the Chapel Shows were rather crudely closed down, many were constrained to emigrate. By this time, the country had quite emptied though a new group came along who had finished university around that time, and had a chance to hear some of the lectures of Miklós Erdély and László Beke, and could read translations by Ákos Birkás. There were events in the Café Rózsa, but by 1979 the field was empty. The few people still here retired into their private spheres and entertained no larger plans. The organizers disappeared completely. 1979 was a very low point in the art world.

This was all unknown to the larger public which had no access to this world. All communication in the private realm takes the form of letters or conversations and doesn't make it to the press. There are, though, certain artists, works, and events about which anyone may know through the mass media. I never strove for such exposure, nor did I consider it important; at any rate, it would have been futile for me at the time. Artistic research is like the scientific variety: the significant things appear in the studio, the laboratory, and the professional literature, rather than in public.

This type of activity did not resemble anything else in Hungary, and had few parallels abroad. There was one, however. The ultimate impetus was given by my meeting with Ulises Carrion, the Latin American artist living in Holland, who was active in Mail Art during those years. In the mid-seventies, he opened a bookshop in Amsterdam called "Other Books and so..," where the most diverse artistic works and alternative publications were sold: postcards, records, artists' bookworks, rubber stamp publications, and artworks in multiple editions. There were several such places in the world at the time, though I did not know of them.

In 1978, one year before the founding of Artpool, I was in Ulises' shop, and completely fascinated by what I saw. I was moved to see such an alternative culture, about which I had previously known little, but towards which I myself had taken some steps and to which I had given thought. Dóra Maurer's type of visual poetry exhibition at Balatonboglár was of this sort, as were László Beke's "Mirror" exhibition, conceptual shows and theatre, though even all this was not diverse enough, to my taste, for full exposure to these genres.

It was such a diversity which moved me in Ulises' shop. From music to images, from sound to tangible objects, all blossomed together as one unified culture. The entire realm that we later assembled in the Archive was already there in the shop. From 1979 on, the Artpool Archive began a comprehensive effort to collect marginal artworks and documents, not represented in museums, of both Hungarian and international origin. These included the alternative and experimental art of the 70s and 80s, fluxus art, and various genres in between. Artistic, theatrical, architectural, literary, musical, and video publications of the last twenty years are preserved without any restrictions on genre. Different strategies were required for Hungarian works than for foreign ones. Generally, materials from abroad arrived to us through the mail, though there were some travelling projects like Artpool's "Art Tour" in the summer of 1982, during which eight boxes of material were collected and brought back. At the outset of Artpool, we had no plans to deal with Hungarian art at all, since

we wished to avoid the attention of the Ministry of the Interior. It was only after the successful launching of the Archive that we began to look at the Hungarian scene. As a first step toward this, I tried to stimulate local mail art activity. Then, from the beginning of the 80s on, I attended every major event in Hungary, documenting the scene with photographs and recordings.

We founded our newspaper, the "Artpool Letter," at the beginning of 1983. This samizdat art journal had a circulation of about 400, succeeding the mail art newsletter, "Pool Window," begun in 1979 with a circulation of about thirty. The AL was the journal of alternative culture, whether tolerated or suppressed. It contained reports and interviews with photographs relating to the events, and was distributed within the circles which it reported on. This was the beginning of a series of eleven, with the last published in 1985. Nowadays, the Artpool Archive has collected, under thousands of names and addresses, tens of thousands of letters, drawings, journals, artists' stamps, books, catalogues, posters, magazines, and audio materials. I do not do any screening, but collect everything sent to me in the Archive. There are a few others across the world who manage similar archives, collecting underground fluxus and mail art not accepted by the mainstream. Each such archive has its own particular bent: some are more literary or verbal in orientation, others visual, and so on. But they all resemble one another in that their activities are manifold. My postcard collection, for example, contains expressly artistic pieces, while Enrico Sturani in Rome collects cards of all sorts, from political cards to advertisements and pornography. Rod Summers, who lives in Holland, is occupied primarily with musical materials, from which he produces cassette editions.

In the recent past, the two most important alternative archives were absorbed into larger mainstream collections. The Getty Foundation purchased the collection of the American Jean Brown, which contains alternative works of various sorts, including fluxus and mail art, while the German Hans Sohm donated his entire collection to the Library of Stuttgart. Other public institutions have of late begun collecting alternative culture, though not always exclusively its artistic side. The Amsterdam University Library, for example, has collected underground materials from pop music to political samizdat.

These archives and collections have much in common, but it is their differences that determine their character. The determining ingredient of diversity, as I have said, is the personal disposition of the founder of the "institution." The best illustration of this is the work of Cavellini, who was one of the most important Italian collectors of contemporary art, until he realized that collections come to resemble one another, since artists sell similar works to each one. After this realization, he began to sell his old collection, and founded the Cavellini Museum, distinct from all others, in which every piece deals with Cavellini himself.

As for my own activity, the fact that it took place in Budapest — or Hungary — has been a determining factor. Of the two, Hungary is more important as an influence; Budapest merely provides the urban environment in which the technical means are at one's disposal. Artpool's activity is distinctive in that it speaks to the entire world from a Hungarian perspective.

The site of the Archive's first mail art exhibition was the Young Artists' Club in Budapest in 1980, though the show, in the "Black Gallery," was "secret" and attended by a closed circle. The Cavellini show which followed, also in the Club, was the contemporary Hungarian mail artists' reflection on the work of Cavellini. In 1981, there was an exhibition entitled "Art and Post" in the Mini Gallery,

assembled from the mail art pieces of Hungarian artists. At the end of the same year, postcards of Hungarian artists were shown at the Helikon Gallery. The largest project of all was the World Art Post exhibition at the Fészek Club in 1982, with some 600 participants. Also in 1982 was the first exhibition / event of Hungarian rubber-stamp art, entitled "Everybody with Anybody," at which the viewers prepared the material for the show with rubber stamps hanging from the ceiling by cords. In April of 1983 took place, with international cooperation, the first East Central European telephone concert, a typical mixing of genres. The artists established a telephone connection between Budapest, Vienna, and Berlin, which they used to transmit musical compositions, texts, and sound works. At the beginning of 1984, the exhibition entitled "Hungary Can Be Yours" was officially suppressed. The Soros Foundation supported the Archive's work of collection for four years from 1985, and as time passed, it became more possible to work with official art institutions. As a result, an exhibition of *artistamps* was shown in the Museum of Fine Arts in 1987. The world at large had recognized Artpool, while our own apartments were swamped by piles of boxes.

With the new political system, the time had come to institutionalize. We had always wanted an open archive. The very word "archive" suggests to most people a passive librarylike receptacle, but Artpool grew by taking the initiative itself, not merely by documenting activities outside and independent of itself. At present, its contents may be viewed on specified research days, or by appointment, generally to members of the field. Artpool plans to offer fellowships to young art historians on Hungarian themes, so that the last twenty years of Hungarian art may be thoroughly researched.

Within the Archive, special collections have taken shape: the Slide Bank, the Postcard Box, the artists' bookworks, the sound archive and the Museum of *Artistamps* (which consists of both Artpool's collection and the estate of the Canadian Mike Bidner). It is the largest such collection in the world. In addition to the document rooms, there are two exhibition spaces and a hall for monthly or bimonthly exhibits. These are partly selections from the archive's materials, and partly new works, new media, and work in hitherto unexplored areas.

There is also a bookshop of alternative art, where works of all genres, published in small editions, are available. In addition to its earlier publications, Artpool intends to produce new editions, including a regular art newspaper in the spirit of the Artpool Letter of 1983-85.

The plans call for the visitor to be greeted by a colourful and vigorous slice of artistic life: running slideshows, videos, news tickers, and a bulletin board containing the latest information.

Artpool was created from my desire to know what, today, can be called art. It has been a part study, part voyage, in the course of which hitherto unknown territory comes into view, the discussions of an alternative life. The continued activities of Artpool will chart a new course: our views will change, the romantic artist will disappear, and art will assume a new function.

My principal interest is fluxus art, whose point is that anything created as art is in fact art. I regard my own work as "attitude art": I live on the supposition that I am doing something which looks into the future, and consequently I get into difficulties. I accept this situation, and express this through my actions. Any medium may be employed to this end, even up to the threshold of incomprehensibility. The institution itself may even be the medium. I was a fluxus artist in the days of Balatonboglár, though unconsciously: in the course of those four years, I regarded the Chapel Studio as my main work. Such is the case with Artpool as well. It is my own work.

Péter Balassa

Enigma Variations

Leonardo's Genius

Some exceptional artists and scholars radiate something beyond the greatness or scale of their work. They may do so through their lives, the peculiarities of their personality, the assertive force of their works, or perhaps merely because of the vicissitudes of their standing. Two such figures stand out in particular, Mozart and Leonardo. It is as if the twentieth century has found, in Mozart's music and Leonardo's enigmatic smiles, its own self-portrait, a model we may imitate, an acceptable and penetrating image of ourselves. It is characteristic of a highly developed technical mass culture that it should be particularly drawn to Leonardo, all but inevitably thirsting for a repetition, reproduction, expansion and embellishment of his art and design. It is as if we wanted utterly to possess the nature of genius and universality now that these qualities are in their twilight.

Over and above the demands of mass culture and commercialism, modern and postmodern mythologies express a justified desire, an obsessive need for a democratic, sometimes levelling identification with "the greatest", an extension of the cult of celebrity to the truly greatest figures the culture possesses. (This is apparent, for example, with Einstein and, particularly, with the famous photograph of him sticking out his tongue.) It is in its passion for identification with the mythical star that our civilization's desires for greatness and its ambition find expression. At the same time, the candidates for this mythic starhood are not selected merely by chance. Certainly anyone who speaks the bold truth about our common dreams must be disturbingly confrontational, but also pacifying and unobjectionable. Leonardo's currency in this sense is virtually timeless; our self-image at the end of the millennium finds its most faithful expression in this master of half a millennium ago, who is just as palpable now as he was yesterday, last year, or a hundred years ago.

"Leonardo da Vinci, Myth and Reality" was the title of a display in the spring of 1991 in the Budapest Historical Museum in Buda Castle. This was an Italian-Hungarian project, an unusual collection of Leonardo-imitations and items

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pertaining to the influence and multifariousness of his oeuvre. The exhibition itself gives a marvellous taste of the scholarly aspects of art history, having recourse to an almost Leonardesque technical imagination and ingenuity. His greatest works were present in facsimile, and an abundance of drawings and copies presented his sketches, patterns, his fantastical and prophetic machines and ingenious world maps. This was rounded off, naturally, by those works of his which have ended up in Hungary. Among these is a bronze equestrian statue in the Museum of Fine Arts attributed to him, studies of heads for The Battle of Anghiari, and modern paraphrases based on it. From the Museum of Applied Arts came a number of sixpointed polychrome tiles found in the castle at Farkashid in present-day Slovakia, which are clearly related to the intarsias in Oxford made in a kiln owned by Leonardo's family, reminiscent of the ceramic fragments decorated with patterns in the Vinci style. From the graphic collection of the Museum of Fine Arts came pieces which anticipated Hogarth and Daumier: Hollar's seventeenth century engravings inspired by Leonardo, marvellous caricatures comparable to the drawings of Sandart or of the archaeologist Anne Claude Caylus, or to Leonardo-imitations of the eighteenth century and neo-avantgarde works (Rainer). One version of Duchamps' moustached Mona Lisa was on display; so was a photograph of Warhol's imitation of The Last Supper. These are accompanied by Leonardo's textual reference, from the Hammer-Leicester codex of about 1508, to the geology of the Danube valley and a page with an explanation for the creation of Hungarian salt mines, as well as a world map on which both the name and contours of Hungary are clear. Also on display (generally in photographic reproductions) were pictures and details from the studios of others who had some link with Leonardo and a ghostly X-ray of the Annunciation from the Uffizi which reveals Leonardo's modifications; there was also a cartoon for the Image of Isabella d'Este on which holes, aids to tracing, are clearly visible. This fragment of a picture suggests that restoration is a process of change which interferes with material memory. As a further illustration of this, there is a facsimile of The Leda of Vinci, also known as Leda / Nemesis — a standing female figure with a black swan and four infants — painted by his Florentine and Lombard assistants, next to one variation of Leda's hairstyle painted by Leonardo himself. Göring loyally bought the Leda / Nemesis for Hitler in 1941, probably because of the second half of its title. In any case, the catalogue expertly and convincingly argues against the modern ideal of restoration: "Radical restoration, typical in the twentieth century, may have destroyed layers and details of the originals, details which might have been crucial to any evaluation of whether Leonardo took part directly in, say, the painting of a hand." Copies and photographs of originals show the relationship between the master and his students, if indeed we may claim to have any knowledge whatever of this.

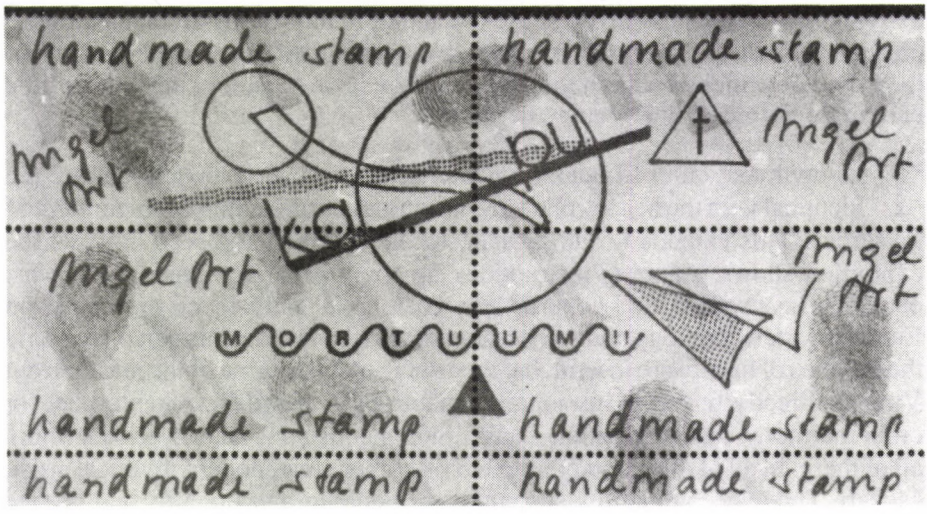
This is because of Leonardo's famously mysterious manner of working. He left behind very few completed paintings, and we must deal rather with fantastical legacies, distinguished in their brilliance and thinking, which has had an exceptionally powerful effect on European art, science, and theory to this day. His ideas were not confined to closed, completed works, but operated rather in

the realm of problems, hypotheses, and possibilities: he cuts a gigantic figure in the history of vision, in the philosophy of seeing and in the observation of nature. Leonardo left his successors a legacy of unparalleled scholarly, iconographical and technological tasks, problems and inventions. As a result, he has stimulated researchers to exceptional efforts to authenticate his paintings on the one hand; on the other, he has proved to be a prophet of technology: his tests and experiments gave the word "machine" its domesticated, environment-friendly, practically postmodern meaning. It is no coincidence that it has become customary to regard Leonardo as a "digital painter," in that his thinking exhibits features intimating the hologram and the computer, and paves the way to postmodern science. The most profound object of his research was the mechanism of perception, human sight and thought regarded as spectacle and problem. This mysteriousness surrounds not only his own formulation of such questions, but also the history of his influence on others, and of the reception of his works. Hence we may regard his life's work and its effects as a myth integral to European culture, created by the man himself, and splendidly illuminated by this exhibition, which offered not a museum-like experience but one with an immediate bearing on life today, a living mythic self-interpretation.

The display, which refers to itself as "artificial memory", mentions the bridge between East and West: the early Leonardo cult at the court of the Renaissance King Matthias Corvinus and of Hungarian cities of the time, as well as the bridge over the Bosphorus —planned then, executed in our century— between Scutari and Constantinople. Finally, it refers to the oil-darkened horizon (sfumato !) of February 1991. As the catalogue states: "In these days, while war is raging, one thinks of Leonardo's imaginary trip to the Taurus, the prophecies among the fabled visions of Armenia, and the wistful letter to Diodorus of Syria in the Codex Atlanticus." Elsewhere we read of the late and startling Flood series: "His sketches of the deluge are symbols of elemental forces depicted in the final and extreme moments of their workings: When they shall destroy all that they have created, formed, and brought into motion, even amid all this destructive power, they shall nonetheless submit themselves to the laws of nature, that the world's end might unfold in order and in harmony."

The myth and cult of Leonardo which have permeated modern culture are identical with the history of his reception and the unending decipherment of mysteries. This extends to the present, to the postmodern; even now, as the exhibition shows, stunning instructions for the present age emerge from his oeuvre. The mystery of Leonardo can be felt not only in his influence on European art, technology and science, but also in the fact that his personality and the outlines of his life are inscrutable themselves. The enigma of the master from Vinci is directly linked to his supreme playfulness, manifest in his respect for order, harmony, and convention—and simultaneously his alacrity in redefining all of these. In all of this he stands next to that other great modern mythical artist, Mozart. The unaccountability surrounding Leonardo's personality and private life, a certain impersonality, help to explain the particular effect his paintings and

works have exercised on psychopaths, mutilators of paintings and art thieves. A history of his works involves not only scholarly investigation and solving of mysteries, but a considerable amount of policework as well: brutal damage to paintings, the attacks of museum maniacs, unfathomable mutilations, murders, and of course an endless stream of forgeries. The Budapest exhibition contained a photograph of that painting which was inaccessible in private collections for a long time, (Madonna Connestabile, of dubious provenance) and was then stolen, in 1948, by a policeman (!), to be later recovered by Interpol. There is a quite telling type of label which is not uncommon: "A Madonna of the Cherry-tree by a Northern imitator of Leonardo, with the monogram of Albrecht Dürer (early forgery)." It is curious how this criminal side of the Leonardo cult somehow mirrors high culture's own Leonardo investigations or, more precisely, its decorous study of forgeries, in which are included parodies, paraphrases, and the occasional quotes from Leonardo. It seems that the temptation to blasphemy and the scrutiny of genuine secrets capture the imagination of scholar, criminal, and madman alike. Certainly Leonardo's enigmatic smile plays a role in this attraction; be it that of his women, boys, or old men, its presence has the same effect. It is as if this smile somehow led us closer to the man himself, yet again not close enough; as if the impenetrable, impassive and disinterested force of existence smiled out from Leonardo's timeless face. Perhaps it is precisely through the inimitable master that we see that the world itself is but a copy, and we within it but counterfeits. One might say that the genius of Leonardo's impersonality, and his susceptibility to imitation, demonstrate the truth of modern biology's metaphorical suspicion that all of humankind is but one unified intellect.



Angelica Schmidt, Germany

András Török

Confessions of a Guidebook Writer

More than twenty years ago, in London, I read a long account in a magazine of a blind and age-worn Argentinean short-story writer. In the middle of the article was his shortest story, which went something as follows.

The emperor had had a new map made but was dissatisfied with the result, which did not contain enough detail. Another map was made for him, as big as the entire throne-room. This one was more detailed than any map to date, but the emperor wanted an even more detailed one. The cartographers set to work; the new map was as big as the palace garden and contained even the smallest sand-heaps of the Empire. But the emperor was not satisfied. He wanted something with even more detail. In time, every scribe in the Empire set his hand to the project. The new version was as big as the capital itself, yet this was still not enough for the emperor, who wanted absolute completeness. Thus there came into being the perfected *carta ultima*, a map which corresponded with the Empire point for point, in actual scale.

To this day, in the deserted farthest reaches of the Empire, the wind still tosses the shreds of the ancient map.

About fifteen years later, in the Shakespeare & Company bookshop in Vienna, I asked for a guidebook on Vienna, but not the kind that simply describes the churches, when this one burned down, when that one was rebuilt, which saints are to be seen in such-and-such a nave; I wanted one that described what life was really like in the city. "Ah, so you are looking for an alternative guidebook", said the assistant. "Well, if that's what you call it, yes, I would like an alternative guide."

Finally, last year, I was looking out from the observation deck, fenced in by barbed wire, of Toronto's CN Tower. I was moved by the sight of this mighty metropolis, by its charms as much as by its scars. I could see the crumbling inner centre. From above, it was clear as day that the city was now moving into a critical period in its development. The present decade is to Toronto what the 1860s and

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70s were to Paris or Vienna. Its character for centuries to come is being decided now. There is no place to which I would rather return. I have seen the ruins, I would like to see the finished work.

The new world, as it is taking shape in Toronto, will not be just for the few, but for the many; it is not rising up out of the din and trash heaps, but in the sun-drenched offices of intelligent bureaucrats. The language and culture of the immigrants are treasures well protected by state funding, the streets are wide and clean, the salads come in all varieties, high culture is holy, a festival of the arts of a small East European country lasts several months, and is first-rate.

From this summit of the developed world, the distant problems involved in the rebirth of an East European metropolis, not visible from here, take on a blinding clarity. It was a hundred years ago there, and not now, that the inner city was demolished in order to build a new bridge over the Danube, and a new town centre harmoniously proportioned to it. Nowadays, thorough changes are afoot there that cannot be seen from any tower. Sleeping Beauty is waking up, and the city's inner core is resuming its development after being arrested for sixty or seventy years. For the moment, construction is focusing on conspicuous but not spectacular bombed-out sites. Afterwards, restoration can begin on the neighbourhoods inside the inner ring of Pest. There will be a long wait yet for improvement of public works, but we are waiting excitedly to see whether the new Manhattan, inhabited by Hong Kongers, will take shape on the tip of Csepel Island, next to the cold carcass of the factory-monster.

For six years I have been living under the spell of a book on this city, *Budapest: A Critical Guide*. There is no point in trying to finish it; this is not an assignment I can set aside as I did earlier efforts of mine. My designs are constantly expanding and I occasionally think that I may actually be able to bring what I have planned, into being.

I wanted to write a book that speaks not only to people of my ilk—the idle chin-stroking egghead who hangs out in bookshop, looking at façades and never lugs a camera around on trips —but to any tourist. Something that would not scare anyone off, since I wanted to make a lot of money out of it so that I would have my own comfortable apartment to come home to later, when I turn to other efforts which pay little and are hardly of any practical use to anyone.

So I sat down in the library and had a look at what sort of guidebooks there were already. Basically there seemed to be three different kinds. The Baedecker-Fodor-Michelin-Blue Guide type, which is packed with information but is a little impersonal. The armchair travel books, whose strong suit is their plethora of colour photographs and are primarily for helping middle-class families with the inevitable Christmastime decision of where to go on vacation next year.

There is a third kind, the alternative travel guide, which usually contains black-and-white photographs, with chapters organized by subject. An edge of social criticism is part and parcel of this genre: it likes to point out that while the centre of town wallows in luxury goods, the housing developments are filthy and ravaged by drugs. In short, it deals not just with truth but reality. My plan was to blend the three genres, even if the result hardly turned out to be a shining example

of any one of them. From the outset I decided that there would be no beautiful colour photographs in my book. There is no way to trick the reader and destine him to disappointment: most of Budapest is dilapidated and run-down—but lovable for this very reason. The sights should be presented in a schematic way, hence my illustrator friend and I decided that we would use the twenty-year-old Michelin guide's red and black idiot-proof maps as our model. (On the first day every tourist is an idiot.) So the top of the maps is always the north and the more important buildings are drawn in three dimensions. The illustrations are detailed enough to show a shadow under every tree, and the sun always shines from West-Northwest, as it does in the afternoon.

After months of futile work, I realized that what I really needed was to imagine an ideal reader, such as Anneke H., a Dutch lawyer, my age to the very day, whom I once led on a thorough tour of Budapest. So I tried to put on paper what I would say (or actually did say) to her.

It gradually became clear why Budapest is such a special place, what I loved in it, and what I wanted others to experience. Visitors are captivated by the feeling that everything here seems somehow familiar from Vienna, Paris, and Munich. Not even all those ambitious social experimenters have been able to destroy this city's generous natural endowments, or the fact that it is fascinating in its decay, that a visit here is a social safari, and that a clash of wills here fairly quivers in the atmosphere. So I realized that this book would present my generation's collective memory of Budapest's past, our experience that, as one great local scholar of English of my generation once remarked, "whoever has not lived under the Kádár regime has never experienced the true sweetness of life."

Of course the places thronged by tourists have a place in the book as well, and great should be mixed with small. I began to regard the book as a museum, a large one, into whose collection I could put items I selected at will from Budapest, and the devil take any aspirations towards completeness.

I knew I was onto something when I decided on the format of walks around the city, since this meant that I didn't need to throw in every last little thing worth seeing; it was more as if life were naturally unfolding itself before us. I soberly worked out the course of the walks in such a way that no significant monument would be left out, and then I struck out, map in hand.

By 1986, one could write a book at least vaguely resembling a "real" city's guidebook, and begin to poke a little fun at certain backward features. But it was a while before I dared to mention the sign in a particular patisserie that announces that "No Food Brought Onto the Premises may be Consumed," or that the Eternal Flame sometimes goes out, or why people wait in line in front of the Adidas store on Váci utca, or why, in the particular Hungarian of a run-down grocery store, "Entrance" means "Exit."

Every tourist is a voyeur whether he admits it or not. He would love to know what lies beyond the Ring streets, the boulevards, the museums, what goes on behind apartment windows. This book is obviously intended for such a person —especially the section called "Budapest: For the Second Time," where the real

alternative material is to be found, like "Twelve Old Shops and Workshops," or "Twelve Impressions." (Soon to be added are "Twelve Windows," "Twelve Graffiti," "Twelve Unusual Gifts," and "Twelve Customary 'Surprising' Snapshots.")

As I say, this book is in some respects the expression of my generation's collective memory and attitudes. Finally the book appeared in 1989, after many ups and downs, and a year's delay. It had a moderate success, generally among intellectuals, though there was no chance of my dream of 100,000 sold coming true, as three or four other guidebooks appeared on the market at the same time, filling the vacuum that had previously existed (though none of those had a photo of the author at a café table on its back cover). To add to that, foreign publishers also revised their books on Budapest; you can no longer read, as I did in 1986, when a world famous guide's latest edition advised that "it is not worth arguing with a policeman over a fine, since the highest possible one is ten to twenty forints" (it is actually more like 500 to 1,000 forints). But I was elated nonetheless. Huck Finn taught me once and for all that you have to trust yourself to Providence.

A peculiar feeling has come over me: I have become a tourist in my own city, though my time is limitless, I never have to return home, and I can revisit any part of the city at any time. My image of it is now unbounded by time or space, a discovery which has reshaped my life. I am no longer surprised to find that I have sat down in a new restaurant or entered a new shop on its opening day. I cannot help that; that's simply where my feet have carried me. And I can't stop now. I am constantly coming up with new plans, gradually becoming the "Bridegroom of the City," like Baron Frigyes Podmaniczky, the celebrated vice-chairman of the Central Labour Council during Budapest's golden age at the end of the last century. Strange as it sounds, that might have been my actual role had I not withdrawn my candidacy for local office at the last moment. After considerable deliberation, I realized that I was born not for battle or for action, but for observation.

I did not withdraw because I have no desire to exercise power, but because I longed for something else — and still do to this day. I would like my book to become an informal institution; I would like the city's old spirit to return; I would like the mocking darts cast by the book to have an effect, and the uncomfortable chairs would disappear, as well as the misspellings on the menu cards (even in French!) and the beer advertisements from the interior of various monuments, as well as the mass-produced clocks mounted on the butts of beer-barrels; I would be happy if high standards returned to the service-industry. I would like to be Samuel Pepys and Egon Ronay rolled into one, a furtive bohemian wrapped in a middle-class exterior, who knows about everything. In a word, I would like to be an institution. So on the back cover of the book's second edition, alongside quotations from *The New York Times* and London's *The Independent,* I arranged for a soberly calculated sentence to be added: "He is a thinking dandy —with a family."

József Barát

The Little Prince

"Amazing! You mean to say that your little Sophie stopped sucking her thumb in two days, all by herself?"

Her Imperial Highness beamed with an untarnished admiration.This was the Grandduchess Leonida Georgievna, née Muchranskaya Bagration, scion of the most ancient ruling family of Georgia, offspring of Kings Ashoth, David, and Iracly. To her family belonged Prince Pyotr Bagration, who died a hero's death as a general under Kutuzov, victor over Napoleon, and to whom there stands a monument in the fields at Borodino.

The admiration of the Grandduchess was understandable, since not everyone's daughter learns to stop sucking her thumb just like that, on her own, at the age of six. But mine did.

"Yes," continued Her Imperial Highness, "A child's strength of will is sometimes amazing. It was this way with our Goga also. As soon as he realized why the road which leads to our house in Saint Briac was called the Avenue of the Grandduke, all of a sudden his relationship to the Russian language, and to his studies, changed completely."

I paused a moment. Goga — that would be this little Czarevitch, His Imperial Highness Grandduke Georgy Michailovitch, now ten years of age and quite possibly one day to be the Czar of All the Russians. It struck me also that my daughter Sophie, descended on her mother's side from stubborn Calvinist petty nobles, farmers, and servants, and on her father's side from Jewish loggers, charcoal burners, tinsmiths, and again, servants (a shared tradition in the family), called to mind the great-grandson of Czar Alexander the Second and Queen Victoria.

I sat there staring into my coffee cup, which Her Imperial Highness misunderstood and said: "How inattentive of me! I had forgotten that you take your coffee with cream, but we've run out."

With this, the Grandduchess dashed out to the kitchen for some cream with an agility beyond her seventy-some years, while I must have been musing on the oddness of all these thoughts, since His Imperial Highness, the heir to the throne, Grandduke Vladimir Kirillovitch had also left the room. He was combing the apartment for the photograph of little Goga (His Imperial Highness, etc.), because he was obsessed by the thought that I could not return to Budapest

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József Barát *was Hungarian Radio's correspondent in Moscow.*

without his grandson's portrait. In a word, they behaved just like a non-imperial grandmother and grandfather who adore their grandchild.

These events took place in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-one, in the month of October, in the city of Paris, where my work with one of Budapest's cable television stations had taken me. Of course it is another story how, in possession of a personal invitation from the Grandduke I had to panhandle the price of the plane ticket from Hungarian Radio, from the journal *168 Hours,* and other national publications, until the cable station was finally ready to cough up. This is all just by way of saying that the crew was exceptionally tightfisted. The production director doubled up as cameraman and, while he was busy setting up the right shots for the interview, turning the apartment upside down setting up and taking down various lamps, and shoving the furniture around (now and again knocking it over with a crash), I chatted with our hosts for a good hour, over not one, but two cups of coffee, not to mention a glass of wine.

It turns out that Vladimir Kirillovitch, second cousin of the assassinated Czar Nicholas, often dreams of walking the streets of St Petersburg. (He can hardly be called the successor to the throne, since there is at present no throne; nor is he a pretender, since he is far from all such ambition, though he has spent his entire seventy-four years at the ready, should the need arise.) St Petersburg he knows from Dostoyevsky, of whom he is fond, in contrast to his feelings about the monarchist Solzhenitsyn, who somehow never appealed to him. Of course the head of the house of Romanov has never been to St Petersburg, though he was invited by the lawyer Sobchak, when he was still Mayor of Leningrad. The Grandduke has waited his entire life for this moment, yet now things do not seem quite right; he is reluctant to fuel the chaos. Perhaps someday, if he is invited by Gorbatchev, or Yeltsin, or — best of all — the Supreme Soviet. "Plenty of- time," declares, with royal tranquillity, the gentleman of seventy-four years, mildly afflicted with Parkinson's disease.

I have never had a stranger conversation than this, nor a finer one. The potential Czar of all the Russians somewhat roguishly pronounced, over his glass of mineral water (he drank neither wine nor coffee) that he is a liberal democrat, passionately devoted to the rights of the citizens—but that the surest guarantee of such freedoms in the Russia of today would be a Czar who espoused the principles of Juan Carlos of Spain. The politicians, and the ferocious jostling among the potential leaders, would open the door to dictatorship. A Czar, unlike a dictator, has no need for a personality cult.

The Grandduke—who speaks five languages, Russian, French, English, German, and Spanish— also expressed his fascination with a young prince who had recently arrived from Russia, a film director, one of whose excellent comedies he had seen. His Imperial Highness showed me a photograph of the two of them together. In the photograph Nikita Michalkov, every Russian woman's heartthrob (who lately has squandered his fabulous talents on lesser projects), exerts his usual charm. This was the man whose brother, a certain Konchalovsky,

went off to Hollywood, leaving about twenty pounds of Soviet decorations at home; his father had written the Soviet anthem. Nikita must have had a good laugh telling that one. His Highness appreciated my suggestion that he must see the young Prince's earlier films, two masterpieces. He calligraphed their titles on a sheet of paper in the polished letters of the days before the language reform, using the now obsolete hard marks: *Etudes for Player Piano. Five Evenings.*

Strange threads run through the mesh of culture and history. The word is that the only reason Kirill Vladimirovich, Vladimir's father managed to escape during that autumn in St Petersburg was that he himself raised the red flag at his palace. And another Prince wrote the Soviet anthem.

Leonida Georgievna Bagration-Romanova, scion of the Georgian royal family, proudly proclaimed that she had turned down invitations from Tbilisi. She was the wife of the Crown Prince of Russia, and that entails obligations. Perhaps the family would have had a happier life as ordinary people, as Kusnetsovs or Smiths, each moving in his own direction, but it is too late for all that: their fate is linked to Russia's. Somehow it happens that her favourite author is Gorky, the father of socialist realism. Her Imperial Highness only left the Soviet Union in 1933, in the shadow of the camps, with the help of Gorky, who sent the royal family to Chaliapin in Italy. But what she did not tell me over coffee was why the author of *Mother* would feel the need for someone of the Georgian princely family to survive to tell the tale. The Princess' grandmother had a washerwoman whose life was troubled because of her husband, a drunken cobbler. Perhaps he beat her, perhaps not, but she had a string of miscarriages. Finally, later, the Lord gave her a child, and she pledged to the Almighty that henceforth she would keep all the Commandments, wean her husband off the bottle, and, if the child survived, she would give him to the Church. The elderly Princess encouraged her servant to steer her lively boy towards some manual occupation, but the woman was firm in her resolve. The child became a handsome, fresh-faced young man, but dropped out of the seminary. His name was Josef Vissarionovitch Dzugashvili; but the world knew the son of the washerwoman and the drunkard cobbler as Stalin. It was perhaps in memory of his mother that he granted Gorky's request that the Bagration family — and with them, the little girl who was to become the wife of the heir to the Russian throne, and grandmother of the little Czarevitch—be allowed out of the country. Strange threads indeed weave through the fabric of history.

More than an hour had passed with our conversation and filming when Mishka, the snow-white, long-haired dog of royal mien stood up before me and gazed at me most reproachfully. I did not know what he disapproved of: was it that we had turned the place upside down, or that we had worn out his master, or maybe that I had enveloped the living room in my pipe smoke? He informed us that our time was up. While we were packing our things, I managed to talk the Czarina-babushka out of giving us some biscuits for the road, and I mused on the parting words of the Crown Prince, expressing his envy for me that I had lived in Russia for ten years. No man alive—you can be sure of that—has ever before envied me for this.

György Galántai

Pooling the Arts

The Artpool Art Research Centre

The embryonic form of the Artpool Archives was the "First Archive," which consisted of four parts, begun in 1971 at Balatonboglár. The first was a large folder in which I displayed, attached to a series of boards, documents pertaining to the Chapel Studio at Balatonboglár: newspaper clippings, reproductions, and works left there by the artists. The second part of the exhibition consisted of those materials which later became the Slide Bank. I made archival slides of all the works at Balatonboglár with an Exa camera and a lens of normal focal length. The third part is a diary, and the fourth, a collection of exchanges by letter, filed accordingly (Police, Bureau of Health, Fire Department, etc.).

In 1978, I had an exhibition at the Fészek Club in Budapest in which I showed books made of copper and imprints of them created with a spray gun. András Bán wrote an accompanying text, though he did not wish to read it aloud. At that time, the American Neo-Dadaist Anna Banana was in Budapest, and she read the text out, though she understood not a word of it—that was the Dadaist touch. The imprints of the books bore as much resemblance to their original as the text read by Banana to the original Hungarian.

I began Artpool with the photographs and catalogue prepared at that time, sending copies of the catalogue to all the addresses I had accumulated over the years. Among these addresses were not only mail-artists, but a much larger circle of artists. Surprisingly many—about half—of some 300 people answered my mailing. Thus began the assembling of the archive. At first all the materials fitted on one chair, with each artist in a separate folder, then I dedicated a shelf to them. This all happened quite spontaneously, without any particular planning. One cannot, after all, plan the unknown.

The first activity of the archive which was actually planned was the participation in an English Mail Art exhibition entitled "Poste Restante," organized by Michael Scott, an established mail artist. It consisted of mailings sent to one another by the participants. It was for this exhibition that I created the first Artpool postcards, which I sent to everyone whose name was on the invitation to the show. I sent these cards, some 500 in number, as a package to Scott, who put them on show, then sent them on to their addressees,

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On March 24, 1992, the Artpool Art Research Centre opened in Budapest. (Open Wednesday and Fridays, between 2 and 6 p.m.). Through it, the Hungarian art world now has access to an alternative institution such as was to be found, in the past, only underground. Its founders are György Galántai and Júlia Klaniczay. Helga László interviewed György Galántai in December of 1991. This article contains excerpts from their conversation.

thus dispersing them around the world, and assuring Artpool of a place in the network. As a result of this, the archive really took wing, as more and more materials began arriving. Nearly everyone responded to my cards in one way or another.

How many people respond depends on what you send; not all mailings get many answers. One has to send a "good" message about oneself. Hence participation in the mail art network demands creativity and an understanding of how, why, and where the process works, of what is its essence, and one must add to this something of one's own. If you can truly expand the genre, you will get the most responses.

The many responses were doubtless encouraged by the recipients' knowing few people in Eastern Europe. Fairly many Poles are active mail artists, though there are fewer Czechs and barely any Hungarians. Our only participants were the three "Tót"-s (Endre Tót, Gábor Tóth, and Árpád Fenyvesi Tóth), and none of the three was an organizer; I assumed this role. It was significant that we gave ourselves a name: "We are Artpool." At that time in Hungary, no one called themselves anything.

I have always felt the need, whenever I represent others in an exhibition and am not merely showing my own work, to find the show some kind of institutional sponsor, however fictive this may be. What is done institutionally requires an institutional name, hence in this case I am not György Galántai, but "Chapel Studio" or "Artpool." Institutions, albeit alternative ones, are characteristic of the alternative world as well, but there, the institution itself is the subject of the art. The Underground does not attack institutions, but rather forms its own.

The term "Artpool" refers to the act of collecting from diverse artistic spheres and endeavours. Its goal has always been, keeping pace with the events of the day, to collect and preserve the documents of international and Hungarian artistic movements, and bring to light new projects. As for mail art, it has never been my primary interest, though I am one of the most active mail artists in Hungary. Art itself is what interests me; mail art is interesting as a genre, as a form of correspondence art, as a fluid activity which brings about relationships between artists. I feel that communication is an indispensable element of art: a traditional statue or picture is also a tool for communication. This leads directly to mail art, whose network I exploit as one of art's possible forms.

The medium of the Artpool Archive was the postal service, a tool I considered suitable to keep me in contact with theentire world. We tried always to keep the Archive's activities within private circles. This was a more mobile mode of existence, and one less influenced by the authorities: it was a trench, a large underground fire base. Of course, nothing is truly private under a dictatorship—even your soul's inner corners are under observation.

Stepping out of private circles required some caution, since bringing my concepts to the larger society was problematic. As long as I worked with some restraint, there were no great difficulties, though I was supervised by the postal service. For example, it was less risky in those days to produce some publication, or book, than an exhibition. There was an international network newspaper by the name of "Commonpress," under the direction of the Pole Pavel Petasz, though each issue would be put out by a different artist. I produced issue 51, which dealt with Hungary. It could have been published without suppression had I produced a publication at my own expense, instead of organizing a public exhibition from it.

The Hungarian art world in the late seventies went through waves: from time to time something would begin to flower — for there were intelligent people working here, arranging activities and shows—but the authorities would quickly squelch them. People were beaten down and could

no longer work. Everyone reacted to this according to his own blood pressure: there were many who left, and many who acquiesced. There was such a "migration" at the end of the sixties, after the great rows occasioned by the Iparterv Exhibitions. During that time left, among others, Géza Perneczky, László Lakner, and Endre Tót, though there were some who stayed. It was then that I began to work at Balatonboglár, which still had some cover and kept the movement alive. Again after 1973, when the Chapel Shows were rather crudely closed down, many were constrained to emigrate. By this time, the country had quite emptied though a new group came along who had finished university around that time, and had a chance to hear some of the lectures of Miklós Erdély and László Beke, and could read translations by Ákos Birkás. There were events in the Café Rózsa, but by 1979 the field was empty. The few people still here retired into their private spheres and entertained no larger plans. The organizers disappeared completely. 1979 was a very low point in the art world.

This was all unknown to the larger public which had no access to this world. All communication in the private realm takes the form of letters or conversations and doesn't make it to the press. There are, though, certain artists, works, and events about which anyone may know through the mass media. I never strove for such exposure, nor did I consider it important; at any rate, it would have been futile for me at the time. Artistic research is like the scientific variety: the significant things appear in the studio, the laboratory, and the professional literature, rather than in public.

This type of activity did not resemble anything else in Hungary, and had few parallels abroad. There was one, however. The ultimate impetus was given by my meeting with Ulises Carrion, the Latin American artist living in Holland, who was active in Mail Art during those years. In the mid-seventies, he opened a bookshop in Amsterdam called "Other Books and so..," where the most diverse artistic works and alternative publications were sold: postcards, records, artists' bookworks, rubber stamp publications, and artworks in multiple editions. There were several such places in the world at the time, though I did not know of them.

In 1978, one year before the founding of Artpool, I was in Ulises' shop, and completely fascinated by what I saw. I was moved to see such an alternative culture, about which I had previously known little, but towards which I myself had taken some steps and to which I had given thought. Dóra Maurer's type of visual poetry exhibition at Balatonboglár was of this sort, as were László Beke's "Mirror" exhibition, conceptual shows and theatre, though even all this was not diverse enough, to my taste, for full exposure to these genres.

It was such a diversity which moved me in Ulises' shop. From music to images, from sound to tangible objects, all blossomed together as one unified culture. The entire realm that we later assembled in the Archive was already there in the shop. From 1979 on, the Artpool Archive began a comprehensive effort to collect marginal artworks and documents, not represented in museums, of both Hungarian and international origin. These included the alternative and experimental art of the 70s and 80s, fluxus art, and various genres in between. Artistic, theatrical, architectural, literary, musical, and video publications of the last twenty years are preserved without any restrictions on genre. Different strategies were required for Hungarian works than for foreign ones. Generally, materials from abroad arrived to us through the mail, though there were some travelling projects like Artpool's "Art Tour" in the summer of 1982, during which eight boxes of material were collected and brought back. At the outset of Artpool, we had no plans to deal with Hungarian art at all, since

we wished to avoid the attention of the Ministry of the Interior. It was only after the successful launching of the Archive that we began to look at the Hungarian scene. As a first step toward this, I tried to stimulate local mail art activity. Then, from the beginning of the 80s on, I attended every major event in Hungary, documenting the scene with photographs and recordings.

We founded our newspaper, the "Artpool Letter," at the beginning of 1983. This samizdat art journal had a circulation of about 400, succeeding the mail art newsletter, "Pool Window," begun in 1979 with a circulation of about thirty. The AL was the journal of alternative culture, whether tolerated or suppressed. It contained reports and interviews with photographs relating to the events, and was distributed within the circles which it reported on. This was the beginning of a series of eleven, with the last published in 1985. Nowadays, the Artpool Archive has collected, under thousands of names and addresses, tens of thousands of letters, drawings, journals, artists' stamps, books, catalogues, posters, magazines, and audio materials. I do not do any screening, but collect everything sent to me in the Archive. There are a few others across the world who manage similar archives, collecting underground fluxus and mail art not accepted by the mainstream. Each such archive has its own particular bent: some are more literary or verbal in orientation, others visual, and so on. But they all resemble one another in that their activities are manifold. My postcard collection, for example, contains expressly artistic pieces, while Enrico Sturani in Rome collects cards of all sorts, from political cards to advertisements and pornography. Rod Summers, who lives in Holland, is occupied primarily with musical materials, from which he produces cassette editions.

In the recent past, the two most important alternative archives were absorbed into larger mainstream collections. The Getty Foundation purchased the collection of the American Jean Brown, which contains alternative works of various sorts, including fluxus and mail art, while the German Hans Sohm donated his entire collection to the Library of Stuttgart. Other public institutions have of late begun collecting alternative culture, though not always exclusively its artistic side. The Amsterdam University Library, for example, has collected underground materials from pop music to political samizdat.

These archives and collections have much in common, but it is their differences that determine their character. The determining ingredient of diversity, as I have said, is the personal disposition of the founder of the "institution." The best illustration of this is the work of Cavellini, who was one of the most important Italian collectors of contemporary art, until he realized that collections come to resemble one another, since artists sell similar works to each one. After this realization, he began to sell his old collection, and founded the Cavellini Museum, distinct from all others, in which every piece deals with Cavellini himself.

As for my own activity, the fact that it took place in Budapest — or Hungary — has been a determining factor. Of the two, Hungary is more important as an influence; Budapest merely provides the urban environment in which the technical means are at one's disposal. Artpool's activity is distinctive in that it speaks to the entire world from a Hungarian perspective.

The site of the Archive's first mail art exhibition was the Young Artists' Club in Budapest in 1980, though the show, in the "Black Gallery," was "secret" and attended by a closed circle. The Cavellini show which followed, also in the Club, was the contemporary Hungarian mail artists' reflection on the work of Cavellini. In 1981, there was an exhibition entitled "Art and Post" in the Mini Gallery,

assembled from the mail art pieces of Hungarian artists. At the end of the same year, postcards of Hungarian artists were shown at the Helikon Gallery. The largest project of all was the World Art Post exhibition at the Fészek Club in 1982, with some 600 participants. Also in 1982 was the first exhibition / event of Hungarian rubber-stamp art, entitled "Everybody with Anybody," at which the viewers prepared the material for the show with rubber stamps hanging from the ceiling by cords. In April of 1983 took place, with international cooperation, the first East Central European telephone concert, a typical mixing of genres. The artists established a telephone connection between Budapest, Vienna, and Berlin, which they used to transmit musical compositions, texts, and sound works. At the beginning of 1984, the exhibition entitled "Hungary Can Be Yours" was officially suppressed. The Soros Foundation supported the Archive's work of collection for four years from 1985, and as time passed, it became more possible to work with official art institutions. As a result, an exhibition of *artistamps* was shown in the Museum of Fine Arts in 1987. The world at large had recognized Artpool, while our own apartments were swamped by piles of boxes.

With the new political system, the time had come to institutionalize. We had always wanted an open archive. The very word "archive" suggests to most people a passive librarylike receptacle, but Artpool grew by taking the initiative itself, not merely by documenting activities outside and independent of itself. At present, its contents may be viewed on specified research days, or by appointment, generally to members of the field. Artpool plans to offer fellowships to young art historians on Hungarian themes, so that the last twenty years of Hungarian art may be thoroughly researched.

Within the Archive, special collections have taken shape: the Slide Bank, the Postcard Box, the artists' bookworks, the sound archive and the Museum of *Artistamps* (which consists of both Artpool's collection and the estate of the Canadian Mike Bidner). It is the largest such collection in the world. In addition to the document rooms, there are two exhibition spaces and a hall for monthly or bimonthly exhibits. These are partly selections from the archive's materials, and partly new works, new media, and work in hitherto unexplored areas.

There is also a bookshop of alternative art, where works of all genres, published in small editions, are available. In addition to its earlier publications, Artpool intends to produce new editions, including a regular art newspaper in the spirit of the Artpool Letter of 1983-85.

The plans call for the visitor to be greeted by a colourful and vigorous slice of artistic life: running slideshows, videos, news tickers, and a bulletin board containing the latest information.

Artpool was created from my desire to know what, today, can be called art. It has been a part study, part voyage, in the course of which hitherto unknown territory comes into view, the discussions of an alternative life. The continued activities of Artpool will chart a new course: our views will change, the romantic artist will disappear, and art will assume a new function.

My principal interest is fluxus art, whose point is that anything created as art is in fact art. I regard my own work as "attitude art": I live on the supposition that I am doing something which looks into the future, and consequently I get into difficulties. I accept this situation, and express this through my actions. Any medium may be employed to this end, even up to the threshold of incomprehensibility. The institution itself may even be the medium. I was a fluxus artist in the days of Balatonboglár, though unconsciously: in the course of those four years, I regarded the Chapel Studio as my main work. Such is the case with Artpool as well. It is my own work.

Péter Balassa

Enigma Variations

Leonardo's Genius

Some exceptional artists and scholars radiate something beyond the greatness or scale of their work. They may do so through their lives, the peculiarities of their personality, the assertive force of their works, or perhaps merely because of the vicissitudes of their standing. Two such figures stand out in particular, Mozart and Leonardo. It is as if the twentieth century has found, in Mozart's music and Leonardo's enigmatic smiles, its own self-portrait, a model we may imitate, an acceptable and penetrating image of ourselves. It is characteristic of a highly developed technical mass culture that it should be particularly drawn to Leonardo, all but inevitably thirsting for a repetition, reproduction, expansion and embellishment of his art and design. It is as if we wanted utterly to possess the nature of genius and universality now that these qualities are in their twilight.

Over and above the demands of mass culture and commercialism, modern and postmodern mythologies express a justified desire, an obsessive need for a democratic, sometimes levelling identification with "the greatest", an extension of the cult of celebrity to the truly greatest figures the culture possesses. (This is apparent, for example, with Einstein and, particularly, with the famous photograph of him sticking out his tongue.) It is in its passion for identification with the mythical star that our civilization's desires for greatness and its ambition find expression. At the same time, the candidates for this mythic starhood are not selected merely by chance. Certainly anyone who speaks the bold truth about our common dreams must be disturbingly confrontational, but also pacifying and unobjectionable. Leonardo's currency in this sense is virtually timeless; our self-image at the end of the millennium finds its most faithful expression in this master of half a millennium ago, who is just as palpable now as he was yesterday, last year, or a hundred years ago.

"Leonardo da Vinci, Myth and Reality" was the title of a display in the spring of 1991 in the Budapest Historical Museum in Buda Castle. This was an Italian-Hungarian project, an unusual collection of Leonardo-imitations and items

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pertaining to the influence and multifariousness of his oeuvre. The exhibition itself gives a marvellous taste of the scholarly aspects of art history, having recourse to an almost Leonardesque technical imagination and ingenuity. His greatest works were present in facsimile, and an abundance of drawings and copies presented his sketches, patterns, his fantastical and prophetic machines and ingenious world maps. This was rounded off, naturally, by those works of his which have ended up in Hungary. Among these is a bronze equestrian statue in the Museum of Fine Arts attributed to him, studies of heads for The Battle of Anghiari, and modern paraphrases based on it. From the Museum of Applied Arts came a number of sixpointed polychrome tiles found in the castle at Farkashid in present-day Slovakia, which are clearly related to the intarsias in Oxford made in a kiln owned by Leonardo's family, reminiscent of the ceramic fragments decorated with patterns in the Vinci style. From the graphic collection of the Museum of Fine Arts came pieces which anticipated Hogarth and Daumier: Hollar's seventeenth century engravings inspired by Leonardo, marvellous caricatures comparable to the drawings of Sandart or of the archaeologist Anne Claude Caylus, or to Leonardo-imitations of the eighteenth century and neo-avantgarde works (Rainer). One version of Duchamps' moustached Mona Lisa was on display; so was a photograph of Warhol's imitation of The Last Supper. These are accompanied by Leonardo's textual reference, from the Hammer-Leicester codex of about 1508, to the geology of the Danube valley and a page with an explanation for the creation of Hungarian salt mines, as well as a world map on which both the name and contours of Hungary are clear. Also on display (generally in photographic reproductions) were pictures and details from the studios of others who had some link with Leonardo and a ghostly X-ray of the Annunciation from the Uffizi which reveals Leonardo's modifications; there was also a cartoon for the Image of Isabella d'Este on which holes, aids to tracing, are clearly visible. This fragment of a picture suggests that restoration is a process of change which interferes with material memory. As a further illustration of this, there is a facsimile of The Leda of Vinci, also known as Leda / Nemesis — a standing female figure with a black swan and four infants — painted by his Florentine and Lombard assistants, next to one variation of Leda's hairstyle painted by Leonardo himself. Göring loyally bought the Leda / Nemesis for Hitler in 1941, probably because of the second half of its title. In any case, the catalogue expertly and convincingly argues against the modern ideal of restoration: "Radical restoration, typical in the twentieth century, may have destroyed layers and details of the originals, details which might have been crucial to any evaluation of whether Leonardo took part directly in, say, the painting of a hand." Copies and photographs of originals show the relationship between the master and his students, if indeed we may claim to have any knowledge whatever of this.

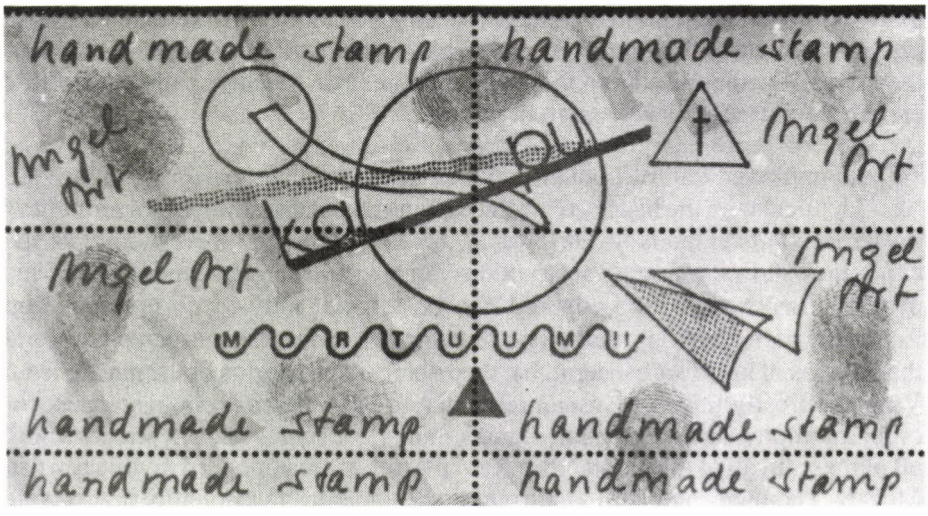
This is because of Leonardo's famously mysterious manner of working. He left behind very few completed paintings, and we must deal rather with fantastical legacies, distinguished in their brilliance and thinking, which has had an exceptionally powerful effect on European art, science, and theory to this day. His ideas were not confined to closed, completed works, but operated rather in

the realm of problems, hypotheses, and possibilities: he cuts a gigantic figure in the history of vision, in the philosophy of seeing and in the observation of nature. Leonardo left his successors a legacy of unparalleled scholarly, iconographical and technological tasks, problems and inventions. As a result, he has stimulated researchers to exceptional efforts to authenticate his paintings on the one hand; on the other, he has proved to be a prophet of technology: his tests and experiments gave the word "machine" its domesticated, environment-friendly, practically postmodern meaning. It is no coincidence that it has become customary to regard Leonardo as a "digital painter," in that his thinking exhibits features intimating the hologram and the computer, and paves the way to postmodern science. The most profound object of his research was the mechanism of perception, human sight and thought regarded as spectacle and problem. This mysteriousness surrounds not only his own formulation of such questions, but also the history of his influence on others, and of the reception of his works. Hence we may regard his life's work and its effects as a myth integral to European culture, created by the man himself, and splendidly illuminated by this exhibition, which offered not a museum-like experience but one with an immediate bearing on life today, a living mythic self-interpretation.

The display, which refers to itself as "artificial memory", mentions the bridge between East and West: the early Leonardo cult at the court of the Renaissance King Matthias Corvinus and of Hungarian cities of the time, as well as the bridge over the Bosphorus —planned then, executed in our century— between Scutari and Constantinople. Finally, it refers to the oil-darkened horizon (sfumato !) of February 1991. As the catalogue states: "In these days, while war is raging, one thinks of Leonardo's imaginary trip to the Taurus, the prophecies among the fabled visions of Armenia, and the wistful letter to Diodorus of Syria in the Codex Atlanticus." Elsewhere we read of the late and startling Flood series: "His sketches of the deluge are symbols of elemental forces depicted in the final and extreme moments of their workings: When they shall destroy all that they have created, formed, and brought into motion, even amid all this destructive power, they shall nonetheless submit themselves to the laws of nature, that the world's end might unfold in order and in harmony."

The myth and cult of Leonardo which have permeated modern culture are identical with the history of his reception and the unending decipherment of mysteries. This extends to the present, to the postmodern; even now, as the exhibition shows, stunning instructions for the present age emerge from his oeuvre. The mystery of Leonardo can be felt not only in his influence on European art, technology and science, but also in the fact that his personality and the outlines of his life are inscrutable themselves. The enigma of the master from Vinci is directly linked to his supreme playfulness, manifest in his respect for order, harmony, and convention—and simultaneously his alacrity in redefining all of these. In all of this he stands next to that other great modern mythical artist, Mozart. The unaccountability surrounding Leonardo's personality and private life, a certain impersonality, help to explain the particular effect his paintings and

works have exercised on psychopaths, mutilators of paintings and art thieves. A history of his works involves not only scholarly investigation and solving of mysteries, but a considerable amount of policework as well: brutal damage to paintings, the attacks of museum maniacs, unfathomable mutilations, murders, and of course an endless stream of forgeries. The Budapest exhibition contained a photograph of that painting which was inaccessible in private collections for a long time, (Madonna Connestabile, of dubious provenance) and was then stolen, in 1948, by a policeman (!), to be later recovered by Interpol. There is a quite telling type of label which is not uncommon: "A Madonna of the Cherry-tree by a Northern imitator of Leonardo, with the monogram of Albrecht Dürer (early forgery)." It is curious how this criminal side of the Leonardo cult somehow mirrors high culture's own Leonardo investigations or, more precisely, its decorous study of forgeries, in which are included parodies, paraphrases, and the occasional quotes from Leonardo. It seems that the temptation to blasphemy and the scrutiny of genuine secrets capture the imagination of scholar, criminal, and madman alike. Certainly Leonardo's enigmatic smile plays a role in this attraction; be it that of his women, boys, or old men, its presence has the same effect. It is as if this smile somehow led us closer to the man himself, yet again not close enough; as if the impenetrable, impassive and disinterested force of existence smiled out from Leonardo's timeless face. Perhaps it is precisely through the inimitable master that we see that the world itself is but a copy, and we within it but counterfeits. One might say that the genius of Leonardo's impersonality, and his susceptibility to imitation, demonstrate the truth of modern biology's metaphorical suspicion that all of humankind is but one unified intellect.



Angelica Schmidt, Germany

András Török

Confessions of a Guidebook Writer

More than twenty years ago, in London, I read a long account in a magazine of a blind and age-worn Argentinean short-story writer. In the middle of the article was his shortest story, which went something as follows.

The emperor had had a new map made but was dissatisfied with the result, which did not contain enough detail. Another map was made for him, as big as the entire throne-room. This one was more detailed than any map to date, but the emperor wanted an even more detailed one. The cartographers set to work; the new map was as big as the palace garden and contained even the smallest sand-heaps of the Empire. But the emperor was not satisfied. He wanted something with even more detail. In time, every scribe in the Empire set his hand to the project. The new version was as big as the capital itself, yet this was still not enough for the emperor, who wanted absolute completeness. Thus there came into being the perfected *carta ultima*, a map which corresponded with the Empire point for point, in actual scale.

To this day, in the deserted farthest reaches of the Empire, the wind still tosses the shreds of the ancient map.

About fifteen years later, in the Shakespeare & Company bookshop in Vienna, I asked for a guidebook on Vienna, but not the kind that simply describes the churches, when this one burned down, when that one was rebuilt, which saints are to be seen in such-and-such a nave; I wanted one that described what life was really like in the city. "Ah, so you are looking for an alternative guidebook", said the assistant. "Well, if that's what you call it, yes, I would like an alternative guide."

Finally, last year, I was looking out from the observation deck, fenced in by barbed wire, of Toronto's CN Tower. I was moved by the sight of this mighty metropolis, by its charms as much as by its scars. I could see the crumbling inner centre. From above, it was clear as day that the city was now moving into a critical period in its development. The present decade is to Toronto what the 1860s and

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70s were to Paris or Vienna. Its character for centuries to come is being decided now. There is no place to which I would rather return. I have seen the ruins, I would like to see the finished work.

The new world, as it is taking shape in Toronto, will not be just for the few, but for the many; it is not rising up out of the din and trash heaps, but in the sun-drenched offices of intelligent bureaucrats. The language and culture of the immigrants are treasures well protected by state funding, the streets are wide and clean, the salads come in all varieties, high culture is holy, a festival of the arts of a small East European country lasts several months, and is first-rate.

From this summit of the developed world, the distant problems involved in the rebirth of an East European metropolis, not visible from here, take on a blinding clarity. It was a hundred years ago there, and not now, that the inner city was demolished in order to build a new bridge over the Danube, and a new town centre harmoniously proportioned to it. Nowadays, thorough changes are afoot there that cannot be seen from any tower. Sleeping Beauty is waking up, and the city's inner core is resuming its development after being arrested for sixty or seventy years. For the moment, construction is focusing on conspicuous but not spectacular bombed-out sites. Afterwards, restoration can begin on the neighbourhoods inside the inner ring of Pest. There will be a long wait yet for improvement of public works, but we are waiting excitedly to see whether the new Manhattan, inhabited by Hong Kongers, will take shape on the tip of Csepel Island, next to the cold carcass of the factory-monster.

For six years I have been living under the spell of a book on this city, *Budapest: A Critical Guide*. There is no point in trying to finish it; this is not an assignment I can set aside as I did earlier efforts of mine. My designs are constantly expanding and I occasionally think that I may actually be able to bring what I have planned, into being.

I wanted to write a book that speaks not only to people of my ilk—the idle chin-stroking egghead who hangs out in bookshop, looking at façades and never lugs a camera around on trips —but to any tourist. Something that would not scare anyone off, since I wanted to make a lot of money out of it so that I would have my own comfortable apartment to come home to later, when I turn to other efforts which pay little and are hardly of any practical use to anyone.

So I sat down in the library and had a look at what sort of guidebooks there were already. Basically there seemed to be three different kinds. The Baedecker-Fodor-Michelin-Blue Guide type, which is packed with information but is a little impersonal. The armchair travel books, whose strong suit is their plethora of colour photographs and are primarily for helping middle-class families with the inevitable Christmastime decision of where to go on vacation next year.

There is a third kind, the alternative travel guide, which usually contains black-and-white photographs, with chapters organized by subject. An edge of social criticism is part and parcel of this genre: it likes to point out that while the centre of town wallows in luxury goods, the housing developments are filthy and ravaged by drugs. In short, it deals not just with truth but reality. My plan was to blend the three genres, even if the result hardly turned out to be a shining example

of any one of them. From the outset I decided that there would be no beautiful colour photographs in my book. There is no way to trick the reader and destine him to disappointment: most of Budapest is dilapidated and run-down—but lovable for this very reason. The sights should be presented in a schematic way, hence my illustrator friend and I decided that we would use the twenty-year-old Michelin guide's red and black idiot-proof maps as our model. (On the first day every tourist is an idiot.) So the top of the maps is always the north and the more important buildings are drawn in three dimensions. The illustrations are detailed enough to show a shadow under every tree, and the sun always shines from West-Northwest, as it does in the afternoon.

After months of futile work, I realized that what I really needed was to imagine an ideal reader, such as Anneke H., a Dutch lawyer, my age to the very day, whom I once led on a thorough tour of Budapest. So I tried to put on paper what I would say (or actually did say) to her.

It gradually became clear why Budapest is such a special place, what I loved in it, and what I wanted others to experience. Visitors are captivated by the feeling that everything here seems somehow familiar from Vienna, Paris, and Munich. Not even all those ambitious social experimenters have been able to destroy this city's generous natural endowments, or the fact that it is fascinating in its decay, that a visit here is a social safari, and that a clash of wills here fairly quivers in the atmosphere. So I realized that this book would present my generation's collective memory of Budapest's past, our experience that, as one great local scholar of English of my generation once remarked, "whoever has not lived under the Kádár regime has never experienced the true sweetness of life."

Of course the places thronged by tourists have a place in the book as well, and great should be mixed with small. I began to regard the book as a museum, a large one, into whose collection I could put items I selected at will from Budapest, and the devil take any aspirations towards completeness.

I knew I was onto something when I decided on the format of walks around the city, since this meant that I didn't need to throw in every last little thing worth seeing; it was more as if life were naturally unfolding itself before us. I soberly worked out the course of the walks in such a way that no significant monument would be left out, and then I struck out, map in hand.

By 1986, one could write a book at least vaguely resembling a "real" city's guidebook, and begin to poke a little fun at certain backward features. But it was a while before I dared to mention the sign in a particular patisserie that announces that "No Food Brought Onto the Premises may be Consumed," or that the Eternal Flame sometimes goes out, or why people wait in line in front of the Adidas store on Váci utca, or why, in the particular Hungarian of a run-down grocery store, "Entrance" means "Exit."

Every tourist is a voyeur whether he admits it or not. He would love to know what lies beyond the Ring streets, the boulevards, the museums, what goes on behind apartment windows. This book is obviously intended for such a person —especially the section called "Budapest: For the Second Time," where the real

alternative material is to be found, like "Twelve Old Shops and Workshops," or "Twelve Impressions." (Soon to be added are "Twelve Windows," "Twelve Graffiti," "Twelve Unusual Gifts," and "Twelve Customary 'Surprising' Snapshots.")

As I say, this book is in some respects the expression of my generation's collective memory and attitudes. Finally the book appeared in 1989, after many ups and downs, and a year's delay. It had a moderate success, generally among intellectuals, though there was no chance of my dream of 100,000 sold coming true, as three or four other guidebooks appeared on the market at the same time, filling the vacuum that had previously existed (though none of those had a photo of the author at a café table on its back cover). To add to that, foreign publishers also revised their books on Budapest; you can no longer read, as I did in 1986, when a world famous guide's latest edition advised that "it is not worth arguing with a policeman over a fine, since the highest possible one is ten to twenty forints" (it is actually more like 500 to 1,000 forints). But I was elated nonetheless. Huck Finn taught me once and for all that you have to trust yourself to Providence.

A peculiar feeling has come over me: I have become a tourist in my own city, though my time is limitless, I never have to return home, and I can revisit any part of the city at any time. My image of it is now unbounded by time or space, a discovery which has reshaped my life. I am no longer surprised to find that I have sat down in a new restaurant or entered a new shop on its opening day. I cannot help that; that's simply where my feet have carried me. And I can't stop now. I am constantly coming up with new plans, gradually becoming the "Bridegroom of the City," like Baron Frigyes Podmaniczky, the celebrated vice-chairman of the Central Labour Council during Budapest's golden age at the end of the last century. Strange as it sounds, that might have been my actual role had I not withdrawn my candidacy for local office at the last moment. After considerable deliberation, I realized that I was born not for battle or for action, but for observation.

I did not withdraw because I have no desire to exercise power, but because I longed for something else — and still do to this day. I would like my book to become an informal institution; I would like the city's old spirit to return; I would like the mocking darts cast by the book to have an effect, and the uncomfortable chairs would disappear, as well as the misspellings on the menu cards (even in French!) and the beer advertisements from the interior of various monuments, as well as the mass-produced clocks mounted on the butts of beer-barrels; I would be happy if high standards returned to the service-industry. I would like to be Samuel Pepys and Egon Ronay rolled into one, a furtive bohemian wrapped in a middle-class exterior, who knows about everything. In a word, I would like to be an institution. So on the back cover of the book's second edition, alongside quotations from *The New York Times* and London's *The Independent,* I arranged for a soberly calculated sentence to be added: "He is a thinking dandy —with a family."

and lived almost a hundred years in the second half of the 18th and the first half of the 19th century. Although she resembled the infant adults of the Spanish court, and corresponded in Italian with a friend in Ferrara, she spent most of her life in a sheltered Transdanubian mansion and its surrounding estate, where everything was—like herself—smaller in scale than anywhere else in Europe. On the other hand, her vitality and health were robust, every atom of her being radiating exuberance, élan and erotic vigour. She first met her Italian friend when the latter, as a young girl, paid a summer visit to the Transdanubian estate, and they struck up an intimate relationship, giving their fantasy free rein in this arcadian idyll. "Our great great grandmother" as a matron of ripe old age vividly recalled her gallant adventures, retaining a level-headed reasonableness that went hand in hand with her playful and conquering nature. She listened to those who wanted her to give advice or ask for her help, such as her brother-in-law, a certain Péter Siraki, once a crypto-Jacobin, and later, amid frequent changes of lovers, a man in chronic financial embarrassment. Siraki had a descendant (and a remote relative of the author rummaging in the family legendarium), who was somehow or other involved in the revolutionary events of '56. After being arrested and tortured, in desperation to have something to confess, he mentions the writer's name, thinking he would surely have an alibi to clear himself. The writer, who in turn was arrested, had never met this distant relative. He now tries to discover through the writing of this "fragment" what might have happened to "rain-coated Siraki", by making investigations on the spot and in his imagination and recollection. In contrast with Mészöly's earlier work, where the limits of "narratability" rendered problematic the issue of what really happened, here it is the facts themselves that seem to have become uncertain. Despite the narrator's virtuosity and command of the ways of representation, of the "variations", despite all the stylistic devices, the stories are obscure. The narrator can only afford those fragments in which he tries to uncover the truth of the recent past from the presumably fictitious account of "our great great grandmother". It is in this way he suspects that the fate of his distant relative (who was hanged) must have been caused by the willow-of-the-wisp spirit of the marshy Pannonian landscape, evoked in the image of "our great great grandma".

Siraki's self-sacrifice has something balladesque about it. So too has another longer narrative in the volume, "A Ballad of the Young Master and the Washerwoman's Daughter", whose very title strikes this note. Here the story is of a more regular structure. Yet again something that seems essential remains hidden. The better part of the narrative takes place on a train in the early fifties, on which the "young man", child of a respectable small town family, now a man of thirty living in the capital, runs into the daughter of their old washerwoman. The girl has been married to an itinerant preacher, whom the state security people had drowned. On the train, headed for the Yugoslav border zone (and therefore under increased surveillance), the encounter ends in an amorous night, a consummation that the nineteen-year- old boy and the thirteen-year-old Gipsy girl had once devoutly wished for. The man is arrested by the police that night for the murder of his wife the previous night. Although he admits to the crime, it is not excluded that this may have been murder in the way that the drowning of the preacher has been passed off as suicide. The now ironically circumstantial, now tentatively interpretative evocation of scenes, landscapes and situations once more gives Mészöly a chance to distil in these brilliant stories something of the Pannonian spirit—of which his own narrative art has now become a part.

A remarkable longer piece makes up the best part of Imre Kertész's collection of stories *Az angol lobogó* (The English Flag). This sixty year old writer is finally beginning to get attention after long years of neglect—years that encompass experi- ments, failures and barrenness. In Kertész not much change has occured, unless it is that he is a little more relaxed in writing about his anxieties and failures. (Indeed he seems to be becoming suspicious about the reception he is now being accorded. As always with Kertész, *The English Flag* too is about "the totality of life", as reflectedin the author's eyes. Writing of this kind could easily become of only personal interest if it were not for the evocation of a whole historical period. It depends not only on the subject-matter, but equally on whether the tone, the voice, thestyle express some essential characteristic of the age we live in.

One of the striking features of *The English Flag* is the questionable character of the narrative situa-tion and motivation. Everything is in the conditional. On one level the message is simply that the narrator could not really tell the story, that a great deal was needed for him to be able to do so, and in the last resort, it would be absurd for him to tell it. "If I were now to tell the story of the English flag as indeed I was encouraged to do by several friends together in company a few days, or months, ago, then I should have to mention something I read which first induced me to have, let's put it like this, a teeth-gritting admiration for the Union Jack, I should furthermore have to give an account of everything I was reading at the time, my passion for reading also, what all this was fed by and what contingencies it depended on, as by the way everything in life does, the contingencies in which we discover in due time either the systematic nature, or else the meaninglessness, of destiny, but in any case, our own individual destinies—I should have to tell when and how that passion started and where it has led me... in short, I should have to relate my entire life."

The English flag is not mentioned until the end of the story, which up to that point is concerned with all that has to be taken into account for the reader to understand the flag as it should be understood. That includes understanding the catastrophe in which certain "texts" (musical compositions, cultural monuments) acquired the role of a message in a bottle. The catastrophe was that of the peace, the four decades of communist peace, which completed and crowned the havoc and devastation wrought by the fascists in the last war. Kertész begins by recounting his days of youthful journalism; having just barely survived the holocaust, he could see himself being a journalist for a brief spell in the peace that followed. He believed that there was such a thing as journalism, and that he had the talent and vocation to practice it. He sees himself and makes himself seen as a journalist through long sentences constantly assessing and reflecting on each other through irony and relativization; the journalist presented is one imbued with the confidence and complacency that misconception or delusion inspires. He evokes a war-ravaged city beginning to be eroded by the decay of peace, and in which there stands today another ruin, the ruin of peace. He relates how Wagner, Thomas Mann, Krúdy, and a legendary writer and journalist of the old pre-war years, Ernő Szép, who having lost his place and role in the catastrophic destruction, used to introduce himself in his last years as "I used to be Ernő Szép", he describes how these creative artists, in their own way, tried to testify so as to redress life in the age of catastrophe, yet were unable to make life complete.

The English flag appears during the revolution of '56, between the first and the second Soviet intervention. In the short-lived days of euphoria (but amid the ruins again) a jeep arrives draped in the Union

Jack which the crowd in the streets sees as a token of sympathy and applauds. A suede-gloved hand approvingly acknowledges the applause with a friendly wave. That is all the role that the English flag is given. However, it contains a life-long symbolic meaning, a message, one that impresses in the author's mind the European culture and civilization that the war and the peace had demolished. As we grit our teeth, we still admire that culture and civilization, but they vanish from sight just like the jeep that disappeared around a bend from which, a few days later, Soviet tanks rolled in. Imre Kertész's masterful story, which is about how the destruction wrought by total war was completed by total peace and how, in this part of the world, the creative artist has no alternative but abnegation, selfabnegation being the only creation left open to the writer.

Imre Szász is of the same generation as Imre Kertész and his new novel, *Megyek, ha elbocsátasz* (I'll Go If You'll Dismiss Me) is also an examination of the destiny and opportunities open to this generation as writers and intellectuals. At a time when Kertész was a journalist, Imre Szász was a student at the famous Eötvös College; after the College was closed down in 1949, he became a publisher's reader. He gave an account of the dissolution of the College and of the late 40s in a documentary novel, *Ménesi út,* and this new book is, according to the publisher's subtitle, "A sequel to the bestselling *Ménesi út.*" The earlier novel mixed fiction and memoir with documents; the sequel is pure fiction, continuing that element in *Ménesi út* that tried to distance and transform personal experience into fictional material. The protagonist of *I'll Go if You'll Dismiss Me* is Ádám Forrai, a literary critic and lectuter, who attended the Eötvös College and, from the early fifties, typical of those intellectuals who kept themselves apart from the regime more or less successfully, making certain compromises in order to work on in their professions; in subsequent decades they sought ways of surviving which preserved their moral integrity.

As Szász admits in the preface, he wanted to write Forrai's story in a way that neither politics nor history would have a major role in the narrative. "For politics is ephemeral in the extreme, although while it lasts it might shape our lives more ruthlessly and murderously than the things that are really important and eternal: our loves, our work, our children and our natural death."

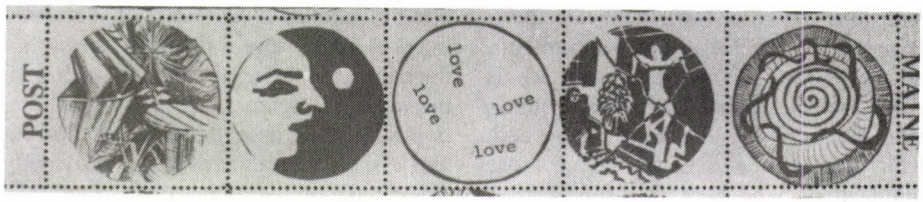
This intention is understandable and indeed justifiable, yet if there was a period in which history and politics brutally interfered with the important and lasting things, it was the 20th centurty and, in particular, the second third of it. On this account, whether the author desired it or not, the novel ignores factors without which the destinies of Forrai and his contemporaries can hardly be portrayed truthfully and authentically.

Imre Szász is occasionally forced to relax his own principles, as when he involves his protagonist in situations in the period following the '56 revolution and in connection with the Czech Charta 77 movement, situations in which politics clearly are a factor. Still the intention to isolate private life from public life is by and large maintained, which does not help a novel concerned with intellectuals dependent on, and closely involved with, power and its manifestations.

It is not only the truthfulness of the representation that is impaired but its aesthetics, the world of the novel, too. Szász brings a number of characters on the scene but they really reveal themselves only in the context of their private relationship to the main character. They are all of them dependent on, or extensions of, Forrai, and a set of coordinates is not provided. They make up two rather distinct groups: that of the women—two lovers and two

wives—and that of the men, who were, like Forrai himself, mostly members of the Eötvös College before they scattered into the arts and culture. Some, like Forrai, withdrew from public life, some took public jobs. There is an unbalance in some of the characters (Trudi, the actress, for example, who commits suicide), appearing only in the chapters devoted to them, though their role and influence plainly extend to the whole length of the narrative; others reappear time and again, even though they are no more than extras. The technique of recollection is associative rather than chronological, thus a portrait of each of the characters should emerge from mosaics. However, this fails to happen or, on the rare occasions when it does, the narrator can only give us fragments.

Although the narrator is Forrai, the author seems to accept this only halfheartedly, and every so often steps in to help him out with comments or by "forcing" certain scenes into illustrations of these explanatory comments. For all his sentimentality, ponderousness, postures struck, sense of guilt, moral dilemmas, ephemeral bursts of enthusiasm, Forrai is still the only character who really comes alive. An ageing man, portrayed with much self-irony and elegiacally, who is "ready to leave" but the zest for life he still has despite the disappointments and afflictions keeps him back for a while yet. Forrai is as ambiguous as he is because of the indecisiveness or incoherence of the narrative technique.He is, nevertheless, behind his façade of cynical humour and mannerism a vulnerable, wise, and althogether likeable fellow. All the other characters and the physical setting of the novel appear ambiguous and lopsided for similar reasons. We have the impression of random selectivity operating for the slice of life chosen. Even though certain details, such as the business of Forrai's manliness, his capacity for drink, or his witticisms are served up a bit too often, we would like to know more about Forrai and the others. Here and there the intellectual stuff is redundant in the dialogues, seemingly serving to extend the authorial comments and analyses, and some of the scenes simply pretexts to develop certain arguments. Imre Szász's novel seems to find its proper subject only near its close, when Forrai suffers a heart attack. At that point he arrives at a situation that has been trying to become the subject of the novel from the start: the state of drifting slowly towards bodily and spiritual death. The signposts of this process of disintegration have been the suicides, resignations and losses. Nevertheless, life does not bore Forrai even after a near fatal heart attack: he is ready for more work and women.



Carlo Pittore, U. S. A.

Gergely Hajdú

Returning to Form: An End to Reduction?

Zsuzsa Rakovszky: *Fehér-fekete* (White and Black), Jelenkor, 1991, 63 pp; Béla Markó: *Kiűzetés a számítógépből* (Expulsion from the Computer), Kriterion (Bucharest), 1991, 86 pp; Dezső Tandori: *Koppar küldűs,* Holnap, 1991, 76 pp; Endre Kukorelly: *Azt mondja aki él* (All the Living Say So), Jelenkor, 1991, 96 pp.

The reduction typical of most recent Hungarian poetry is not so much a devaluation of poetry as a voluntary limitation of its goals; the victory of Classicism in the broadest sense over the attitude of Romanticism. In running out of breath, obvious by the second half of the 1970s, the neo-avant-garde set off the same process as the decline of the "classical" avant-garde did in the 1930s, even if the current process is more resigned and often ostentatiously ironical, it has led to a return to more traditional notions. The poets involved in this classicizing turn no longer protest against the idea of creation as craft, turning out texts. They once again seek for a balance between emotion and the intellect and are engaged with problems concerning the personality, which previously had been naively thought to be obsolete. Instead of endless visions, and aiming at the totality of the world, they remain within the sphere of their own experience and seek the most graphic images possible, searching for *le mot juste,* for works whose dynamics are faultless.

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As always at times like these, the change was accompanied by a reassessment of the classics of the language. In the 1980s the key figures became Dezső Kosztolányi (1885-1936) and one of his contemporaries, Ernő Szép (1884-1953), both of whom previously had been held in considerably lower esteem because of their hyper-sensitivity stylized into a childlike attitude, their interest in scarcely perceptible trivia and their sensual precision. Among the more recent writers of acknowledged status, the late Ágnes Nemes Nagy came closest to this ideal. As did, to a lesser degree, István Vas, (who died in December 1991) who had, as he preferred to put it, for a while been deprived of the grace of writing poems.

It is in connection with such facts that it is possible to speak of depreciation. Although there are many good poets and their average standard is much higher than that of those working in fiction, let alone of what the playwrights have been producing, not one of the poets could be called great. Since true genius also signifies a point of crystallization, sign posts for orientation, the absence of genius is deeply felt in Hungarian literature. All the more so because true genius was always present in this century. (The absence of poetic

genius can be felt all over the world.) The last universally acknowledged great poet was Weöres, who died in 1989. (He has been rightly compared to T.S. Eliot.) Weöres did not share the aesthetic principles outlined here; on the contrary, he drew on the amazingly wide range offered by human consciousness, and moved with a seemingly spontaneous ease in cosmic dimensions. It was in fact the moderately gifted Weöres epigones whose attempts have most strongly compromised the intention of expressing all. (Here Ferenc Juhász occupies a specific position: at the beginning of his career in the early fifties, he showed signs of a truly great talent, but from the mid-sixties he became a state-supported poet, who could not be criticized even on purely poetic grounds. Juhász's self-awareness was not strong enough to cope with the inconsistencies of his own approach. At that stage his appallingly lengthy, pathetic, shapeless "epics" had only a few successful images or lines to remind the reader of his promise.)

There is great need for the way to be shown by a genius who professes different principles; a growing number of people feel classicizing to be too ordinary, almost boring, and only a few find the ways to lend animation to it of their own accord.

It would be difficult to speak of Zsuzsa Rakovszky without enthusiasm. She can truly be described as the heir of Ágnes Nemes Nagy. Expressly conservative as a writer, she does not strive for radical turns at all costs and clearly rejects any role as a figure around whom other writers can coalesce. She does what the majority of her fellow poets do; but her concrete solutions are much more successful.

Zsuzsa Rakovszky made a name for herself with her first two volumes. Her carefully sifted and shaped poems (so far not even a hundred in number) have always been free of most of the failings that young poets are heir to. Some of her early pieces could have been just as easily written by some of her fellows working in a similar idiom—her "Our Adulteries" by Szabolcs Várady, for example.

The title of this poem points to one of Rakovszky's favourite themes, that of the conflict between different roles. The urge for finality and security, the "stylistic demand", and the pressure of the passage of uncertain time, can only force a decision which one accepts with a bad conscience. "But the arbitrariness which enables a decision /is the same which also invalidates it." "Chandelier Possibilities" Rakovszky elegantly glides over the pitfalls of life styles and attitudes that are rigid, although she does so with an unconcealed nostalgia. She treats the elements that shaped her with the same elegance; that she was born a woman, into an impoverished old-world middle-class family, in a small Baroque town. All these factors can only limit her to the extent she herself is willing to accept.

She is also strongly taken with the moods of the times; at first with the "permanent present crashing down on us" of the Brezhnev era, and in her second volume, with the sense of a state of temporariness. All the many topicalities only serve as pretexts for the presenting of mental reactions. Thus this aspect of her poetry has lost nothing of its value.

In her lyric poems her starting point is a clearly restricted range of experience; yet it provides an intensive experience of totality by mobilizing every layer of her personality.

Of these the most important is visuality: thus of a rotten apricot, "half the fruit is rusty, dead glass-meat", or of an autumn leaf fallen into the "green sham-otherworld" of a basin, "under the seething, warm glass / it glows: a faultless, coloured dead". The philosophy to go with it, the "archangelic objectivity" of the glance, is of equal importance. The cold glance accepts only facts, not judgements; yet this is confronted with the demands of ethics,

with the firmness of views, indispensable for life, with an intellectual system which could loosely be called Neoplatonic. By views I mean not so much statements as the questions that emerge from impressions more profound than those apprehended through the senses. The poetic self views itself as the medium of emotions of hypernatural force and purity. To this there is the counter-point of an objective world outlook, a "raving, dazzling theology" of joy and rapture.

Most of her poems are built around these two poles; the graphic contrasts are even indicated in the title of her latest collection, *Fehér-fekete* (White and Black). There is also a linking thread between the two poles, and this is memory. Zsuzsa Rakovszky even treats the present world as a memory. Her "sensual" precision has a singular effect through its evocation of the details of impressions whose logic is that of remembrance. Her inner world is divided up by zones and bands of light and heat; several critics have compared it to a stage, and she herself has used the same simile "Episode".

What makes it difficult to write about Rakovszky is that she usually anticipates her critics. The completeness of the lyrical self already mentioned includes the "planted observer" of the intellect, who, as she puts it in "The Red Indian of the Kärntnerstrasse," "always provides me with marginal notes". She keeps inserting comments in her poems about the value of her processes, her models, and their character, whether topical or outdated.

The second cycle in her new volume—"Voices"—uses dramatis personae. "Old Woman", "The Overthrown Dictator" (a reminder of Ceausescu) "The Jilted Girl", "The Drug Addict", who thinks he alone knows the sense of life, and the others, speak of their failures in life in dramatic monologue. As a form, this is much more rarely used in Hungarian poetry than in English. (Zsuzsa Rakovszky, not incidentally, is a professional translator of English literature.) In one interview she has spoken of the influence of Carol Ann Duffy, among others. The cycle preserves all that is good in her poetry and has added a hitherto neglected narrative element. Her intensive idiom compresses whole novels into a few lines. Her characters employ everyday idiom in keeping with the personality they project, yet they also use Rakovszky's typically heightened speech, and they look upon themselves with a much sharper eye than would seem probable—the sober joy of recognition and the piquant joy of irony come together. The many forms of monomania still give life a shape and so are implicitly granted forgiveness; seeking for a balance between cruelty and compassion, Rakovszky continues to abstain from passing judgement.

Irony features to a degree in the structure itself and as a consequence she makes no explicit use of it. There are no mitigating, apologetic processes meant to attract attention. The rhymes are conventional and some are particularly individual; the loose metres approach speech and even "Niebelungian" alexandrines are used although concealed by type-setting.

Unity and diversity, ironic and serious idiom all at once, are what the poets discussed here are seeking. But Zsuzsa Rakovszky's solution cannot be imitated, based as it is on her instincts and not on her choice of genre or theoretical considerations.

After several volumes of avant-garde verse, the neoclassic has produced an imposing rise in poetic quality for the Transylvanian Hungarian poet, Béla Markó. Markó is one of a large number of poets who exclusively use the sonnet form, including the popular György Faludy. (See *NHQ* 112 for a review by Balázs Lengyel of a volume by László Bertók, perhaps the most highly gifted sonneteer.) Although this choice spectacularly expresses a change in attitudes

to tradition, it must be said that the sonnet does not serve all purposes. It is fairly dangerous to use it for the expression of homogeneous moods, whether the antithesis between octave and sestet is employed or not. The rigidity of the form often forces Markó, too, into inserting superfluous filling lines. Indeed, he has had to abandon those grotesque images which had previously been his hallmark. Nevertheless, he has succeeded in offering a memorable portrayal of a declining world, a disintegrating society and projecting his own disciplined, resigned personality.

In his new volume he attempts a synthesis of his two different poetic worlds; the result, however, does not come up to expectations.

Kiűzetés a számítógépből (Expulsion from the Computer) is strictly symmetrical in structure, opening and closing with a Sapphic verse, whose optimistic note seems to be the reason for their placing. Two sonnet cycles figure, one on love and the other a tribute to the poets of old. Further on in the volume, some effective sonnets very likely belong to an earlier period and sometimes sound like Verlaine translations.

Like Rakovszky, Markó tries to use traditional forms without alienation, however, he is unable to overcome the seemingly accepted restrictions with the same ease. This is also how he reacts to the values he has chosen and the traditional order of life: all finality and limitation arouse in him an elementary wish for freedom. In his view "serving freely" is not enough, real freedom can only come from chosing for oneself ("Sonnet for Ágí's Keepsake Album"). Other decisions mean no more than stepping into a different cage: "there is no freedom for him / who is enthusiastic / who snatches at / this and that, at love". This contrast between order-cum-captivity and freedom-cum-homelessness is almost the sole content of his love poetry. He rarely has any more to say on the content of love relationships. It is particularly striking how wantonly and unprepared the second person appears in the cadence of some of the poems.

More successful are poems which treat the desire for freedom as an actual theme instead of a means to ousting some other theme. Some poems using topoi that appear medieval and, by exploiting his sense of the grotesque, most forcefully express his ambivalent relationship to mortality. ("Memento Mori", "I Am Already Living in Grasses and Lizards".) The soul, free at last, escapes from the decaying body, from fate, love and poetry, in the form of a lizard, an ant and atoms in movement. The other group of sonnets mainly portrays despair over the inexpressibility of an autonomous personality. This oeuvre (which he confronts with the spontaneity of a scream) no longer expresses what he himself actually is, only what he has been turned into by the resistance of the medium, "paper" and tradition, the "old poets" or, in the final analysis, perhaps God's scheme. ("The Sonneteer's Epilogue").

Markó has placed his most recent work, odes in verse libre (though in part dactylic) in the middle of the volume. He presents visions of unification with the world with romantic pathos, and, surprisingly, in a much more banal formulation than the sonnets do, with more self-repetition and disproportion which spoil the poems' dynamics. (The title poem is the weakest of all.)

In some other of these odes (e.g. "Since When Have We Been Living at Night?") their functional distortions express the swirling contents of his consciousness fairly well. Nonetheless I feel he has broken with traditional forms prematurely, since, the sonnet, after all, is not the only such form. Understandably a poet may be impatient to transform himself, but it is reasonably obvious that he cannot do without the disciplinary force which has produced the sonnets.

It would be difficult to imagine a more radical reduction than Tandori's. In the late 1960s he made a memorable debut and, rooted in the neo-avantgarde, influenced to various degrees everybody writing poetry in Hungarian, although his followers included no really noteworthy poets. The essence of his innovation at the time was the emancipation of structures without content; he boldly entrusted poems to articles, conjuctions, suffixes and their abstract meaning. Firmly placing his own personality in the background, he took selected quotations, e.g., from Kant, and made them clash with a vulgar proverb, or classical poems of high standing with some nonliterary text.

Tandori still steers clear of works with a traditional substance, of conjuring up shared experiences with the reader for their own sake. Nor has he shaken off his radicalism, but he has tamed it somewhat. Since 1977, he has been applying his methodical principle of carrying things to absurdity to create a mythology of his own. This process has pathologically proliferated recently.

Many writers assign special significance to whatever preserves its own authenticity, as against objects without a past, of contingent form, with which our modern world is filled and as against prefabricated human fates without personal features. The trouble is that they do not insert these things into their various works, and use their vocabulary without explanation or justification, even though it only makes sense in the knowledge of their oeuvre as a whole. Some of the oeuvres concerned are no more than a repetition of some selected motifs. (Though this, too, can be done at a high standard, as in the case of Ottó Tolnai, a Hungarian poet in Yugoslavia.) Tandori had completely emptied his poetic realm and his private life, leaving behind no more than sparrows, teddy bears and button football. He represented a life of absolute gentleness in an expressly militant manner. Exploiting the fact that publishing under the socialist regime took no notice of the market, he published extremely bulky volumes on minimal experiences. His readership in that period was probably in three digits but it was not his poems that mattered, but rather his kind of existence as such.

His recent works have once again become more popular, as they again discuss those most banal and most substantial of subjects: mortality and doom, and indeed, the short life of sparrows offered much scope for concentrated empathy. (Growing difficulties in publishing have however compelled Tandori to publish selected works only.) The main motif in *Koppar küldüs,* too, is the link between this world and the next, divining the messages of birds that have died. The individual pieces turn the gloomy contents into tragicomedy, effective in their entirety, and the whole leads up to a splendid Lied, "All-Saints' Day in London".

The title, Tandori tells us, marks the stages of a journey: Copenhagen (*Koppenhága* in Hungarian), Paris, Köln and Düsseldorf. He wrote on a typewriter with a German keyboard lacking accents for Hungarian vowels; furthermore, he ignored those that were available and did not bother to double the consonants. Nor did he correct typing errors, regarding them as vehicles of potential heavenly messages and spontaneity; indeed he even added several quasi-mistakes, all of which makes reading as difficult as in the case of a medieval interpolation. The slow reading thus required lends a great evocative force to the stubbornly recurring simple message. The "cacography" and bad syntax also form part of the friend-of-the-sparrows' Franciscan abandonment of dignity. (This is also aimed at by a dreadful illustration on the title-page: "136 different types of U.F.O.s"—which, however, still does not spoil the ancient metaphor of flying—otherwordly life.) The text also acquires multiple meanings,

depending on the manner in which one adds the missing accents.

The title itself can conjure up a second meaning as well as *Kopár koldus*, meaning "bare beggar". The poet sets the beauty of the cities and parks, the abundance of museums and churches against his own inner poverty, his drained and lost being—but in a manner which is infinite in its irony. He seems to be sharing the experience of the beautiful world with his reader, while his spoiled language excludes identification. The "loss" of language bespeaks a state of being infinitely skinned, while the series of otherworldly messages ("no, no, he doesn't come, he sent word, I wrote yesterday, but there came / the little thrush") provides a link with transcendental Being. Finally, he convinces us of the antithesis of his statement: the room left behind in Budapest, full of half blind sparrows, clamorous tomtits, stench, noise and affection, surpasses in its value the splendid outside world.

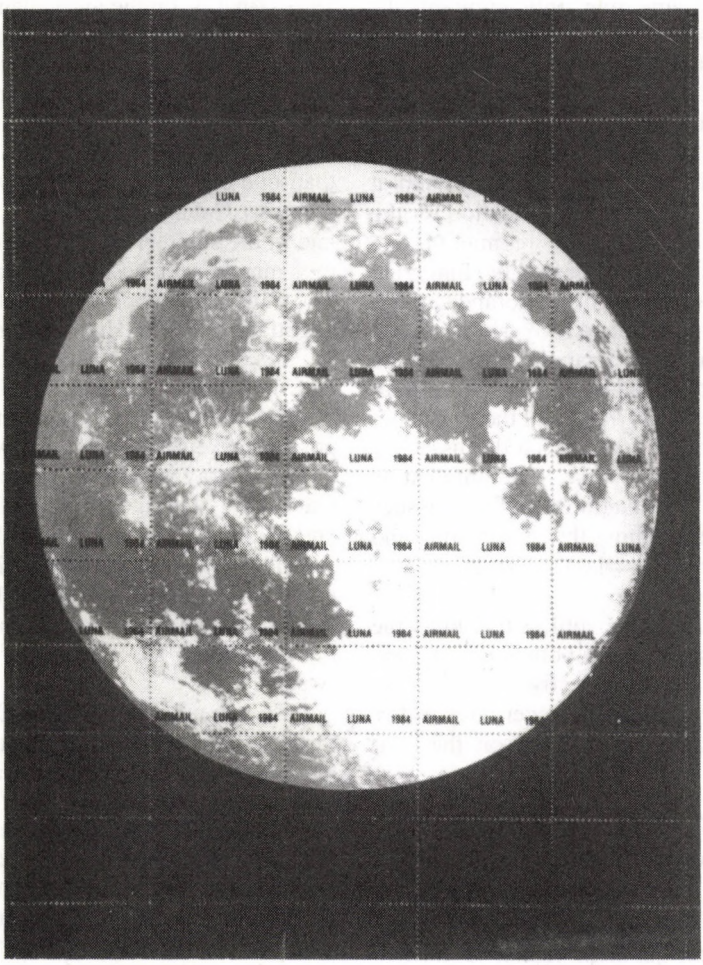
Since then Tandori has fitted his favourite cities into his poems and stories, even race-horses. He seems to be putting an end to reduction and to be regaining the world step by step. By describing the mysterious connections which link the elements (e.g. tips on the winning horse coming from the teddy-bears of yore), he re-stylizes himself as well. Franciscan simplicity is replaced by a playful paranoia that somewhat resembles Strindberg's *Inferno*. He has maintained the evocative power of his poetry—but the one-sidedness of his minimalist self-limitation is not slackened by more than a shade.

Even in his fourth volume, Endre Kukorelly does not attempt to expand the narrow consciousness he has long found sufficient scope within. It is not easy to decide whether he has any protagonists, as he uses a mixture of first person and third person; if there are such protagonists, they are all vegetating in the same way. By keeping the grammatical person in uncertainty, he seems to be asserting that the diversity in human fate is merely an illusion. He is only interested in the common, bitter core of every life: "the emptiest soul / appeals to me". Vividness is provided by his varied, provocatively ironical methods of rhyme, rhythm and witty allusions. The mock naive use of all this skirting the limits of good taste, ranks him with the thriving pseudo-dilettante school (He dedicated a poem subtitled "Dilettante Poem" to Lajos Parti Nagy, the most momentous figure in this school.) In this way he makes the outmoded acceptable, such as the sentimentality and conventional basic situations of the opening of his best new poem, "He Is Looking at an Old Photograph." More frequently than disguising them, he fully rejects literary automatisms, even avoiding metaphors and is more concerned with sentence construction.

Kukorelly's methods are the antithesis of those used by Zsuzsa Rakovszky, but he closely resembles the young Tandori. He too has a penchant for using lower grammatical categories to describe abstract meanings; this volume even includes a poem using no accents at all. Perhaps he most resembles Beckett: the latter's "Texts for Nothing" set into shorter lines, with some bizarre rhymes and enjambments added, would pass for a Kukorelly poem. Kukorelly did not intent to excite pity when he included descriptions of a sociological precision of his home, one of Budapest's decayed inner districts and its typical characters. The remnants of human dignity are evident in how they bear their abasement. The angels expelled from heaven, he writes, "did not heroically flutter a little / as what would be brave here is not-to-fly". His world is only a stone's throw away from heaven and hell: "I tried to stick / one of my fingers through the firmament". His finest moments are those in which he formulates with biblical concision his far from orthodox message: "Get up / and keep quiet", or, "Today the whole / day I cannot stand, I feel this soul." He

often opens his personal, sometimes very profane works with sentences such as "I opt for old age", or with an example, which by itself can be taken to be cheerful, "Actually Friday is Sun / day".

Though Kukorelly continues to write poems that begin most realistically, and only break with an absence of interest at the very end, his new volume includes a larger proportion of pieces which directly discuss the experience of existence. Employing new, not yet fully tapped means, the poems, touching on the problem of the exterior and the interior, of dust and soul, are able to express, despite their apparent simplicity, profound, sometimes in fact esoteric, substance. Poems amassing predicates often omit a subject or replace it with the word "something". (E.g., "You, Who Is the One Who"). Though at certain points one could substitute some word, such as God or Everyman, but why should one limit the irresolvable by dubious decodings? Kukorelly has approximated to capaciousness with a method which is organically linked to his past work and seems promising for the future as well.



Bob Watts, U. S. A.

Ignác Romsics

Versailles—with a Fresh Eye

Mária Ormos: *From Padua to Trianon 1918-1920.* Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990, 409 pp; József Galántai: *A trianoni békekötés 1920* (The Treaty of Trianon 1920). Budapest, Gondolat Kiadó, 1990, 235 pp.

These two books on Trianon appeared at the same time, only a few months after the demise of censorship. Mária Ormos and József Galántai have written works which are neither part of the sensational material now peddled from stalls at metro station entrances, nor are they among that class of literature which seems to aim at supplying a historical justification for the foreign policy of the new regime. Professor Ormos's book appeared in Hungarian in 1983; students at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest have for years pondered over the Treaty of Trianon in seminars led there by József Galántai. The peace treaties concluded in Paris and the issues deriving from them are much discussed by historians everywhere. The interest is rooted in the magnitude of the issues involved, something that is still true, and in the problematic character of the arrangements.

It is not only the subject that links the two books. They are both scholarly and endeavour to be objective. In virtually every other respect, however, they differ. Mária Ormos concentrates on the year between the autumn of 1918 and that of 1919—that is, on the antecedents and the drafting of the Treaty of Trianon. What follows, the nearly one year between the collapse of the Bolshevik regime of Béla Kún and the June 1920 signing of the treaty, takes up but fifty pages, no more than one-eighth of the entire work. It is here that Galántai begins— at that point late in the summer of 1919, which Dr Ormos merely sketches with a broad brush. The bulk of his book deals with the 1920 negotiations by the Hungarian delegation in Paris or, more precisely, with the associated diplomatic events.

Mária Ormos studies primarily the position taken by France, drawing upon quite an array of French sources. József Galántai's vantage point is Budapest and Hungary; he relies largely on the secondary literature in Hungarian and in other languages, and on published documents, occasionally supplemented by material from the Hungarian National Archives.

Last but not least, Mária Ormos addresses fellow historians whereas Galántai has written for the educated Hungarian general public. This explains why Dr Ormos devotes no space to the background information necessary for an understanding of what she has to say, presuming that her readers are familiar with the facts; Galántai, on the other hand, repeatedly goes into facts which

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historians are reasonably well informed on.

A large number of memoirs and historical works in many languages—chiefly English—deal with the period discussed by Ormos. Much less has of course appeared on the Hungarian angle in English, though still much more than in other languages. Francis Deák's *Hungary at the Paris Peace Conference* (New York, first published in 1942, and reissued thirty years later in 1972) was reckoned the authority on the subject until the seventies. Through the 1970s and 80s there appeared a number of articles and books on similar themes; outstanding among them was a work by a historian of Hungarian origin, Peter Pastor (*Hungary between Wilson and Lenin: the Hungarian Revolution of 1918-1919 and the Big Three*. New York, 1976). Pastor was among the first who, having worked in British and American archives, turned to French sources as well. Another publication that demands attention is the volume by various contributors, published jointly by Atlantic Research and Publication, and the Committee for Danubian Research, not least because it presents a variety of positions (*Essays on World War I: Total War and Peacemaking. A Case Study on Trianon*. Eds., Bela K. Kiraly, Peter Pastor, Ivan Sanders. New York, 1982).

Consequently, Mária Ormos's book will not surprise the English-reading public as much as it did Hungarians ten years ago. It will be read with a certain interest, for it expounds on French foreign policy toward Hungary in 1918-19, as well as the predrafting activity of the peace conference with respect to Hungary and, of course, the decisions themselves, all in a way more detailed and exhaustive than before.

The most important part of Dr Ormos's work is, in my opinion, a balanced presentation of the degree to which the territorial rearrangements in the Danube basin were the work of France or the common will of the victorious Entente. On this, two extreme views are current in Hungarian historical writing and public opinion. France, according to a conventional cliché, is responsible for "every evil": she was solely responsible for the new Central-European order. Others, on the contrary, argue that the treaty expressed the joint position of the Allied Powers, and that there were no essential differences between them concerning Central Europe. Mária Ormos suggests that, while the true role of France is worth reconsidering, it must not be forgotten that the conventional view is itself based on quite substantial evidence. To put it briefly, she stresses that the common Allied goal from the summer of 1918 on was to dismember the Austro-Hungarian empire, to establish nation-states, and accordingly, to confine Hungary within ethnic borders—though no identity of views existed between the four powers concerning the drawing of the country's borders. In their discussions—and herein lies the basis of the conventional view—France took up a consistently anti-Hungarian position and the United States, one that was consistently pro-Hungarian; Italy generally supported America and the U.K., for the most part, France.

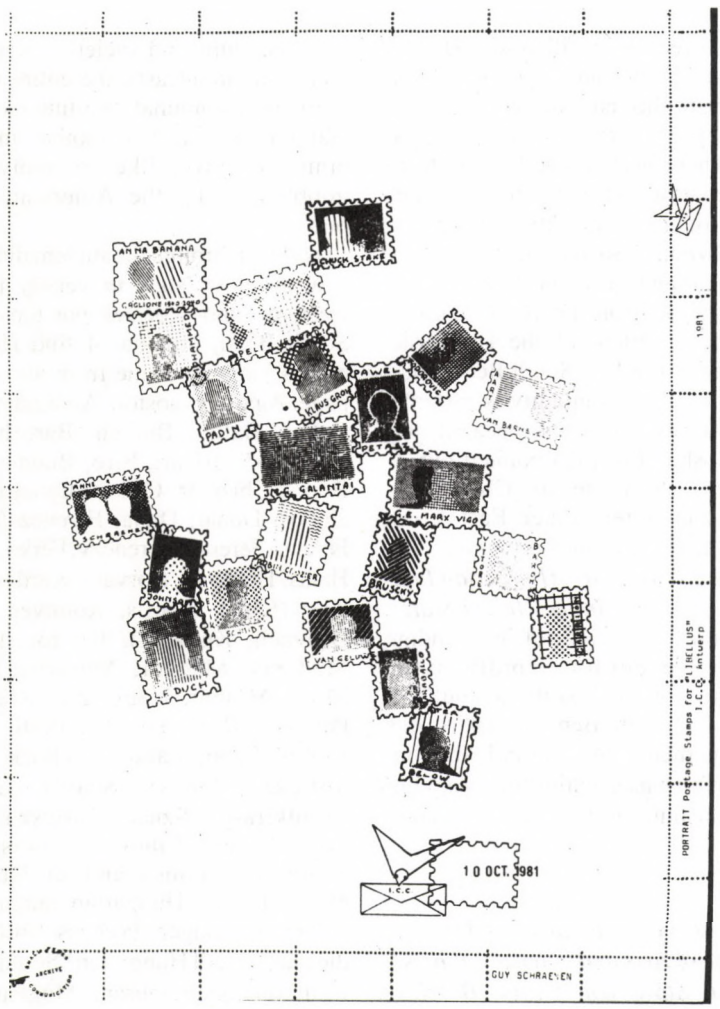
The second major point made by Dr Ormos is that the decisions taken by the peace conference were not significantly influenced by Hungarian domestic events. Count Mihály Károlyi, had he remained in power, would have received the same borders that Miklós Horthy did, in fact, get. This is important to emphasize, chiefly because it is commonly held—particualarly by the Hungarian general public—that Trianon was a sort of punishment meted out to Hungary for proclaiming a Council Republic in 1919. The truth is, however, that the peace conference had established the borders between Rumania and Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, and Yugoslavia and Hungary by mid-March of

1919—that is several days prior to the Bolshevik takeover. Indeed, there was to be little subsequent change. Only the Austro-Hungarian border remained an issue during the time the Council Republic lasted. When it came to the untangling of finer points, the Allied Powers were motivated not by Hungarian domestic politics but by the all-important ethnic principle and the need to compensate Austria, as well as to persuade her to abandon all notions of an Anschluss, that is, a union with Germany.

What is chiefly to the credit of József Galántai's book—beyond its lucid overview of the events of 1920—is the honesty with which it confronts all that Trianon means to a Hungarian. For a long time the subject was taboo in Hungary; when finally tackled, this was done with timidity and "onesidedness." Trianon, of course, was condemned by everybody—yet often enough, it was unclear just why and to what extent. Galántai honestly describes the development of nation-states and the dismemberment of the Habsburg Empire and historical Hungary, as an historical necessity. Thus he criticizes the Treaty of Trianon not because it sanctioned the dissolution of a "thousand-year-old" Hungary, but because it failed to apply ethnic principles where it could have; not because Transylvania, the "Northern Uplands", (i.e. a substantial portion of Slovakia) and the Bácska were detached but, rather, because in addition to reallocating territories with majority ethnic populations, it also deprived the country of border areas whose inhabitants were largely or overwhelmingly Hungarian (the Csallóköz—a large island between two arms of the Danube on the NW border, and the eastern and southern marches of the Hungarian Great Plain). Hence Galántai also sharply criticizes the Hungarian delegation for its strategy of arguing from history and established rights. He agrees with Gusztáv Gratz that the delegation "in practice put forward desires impossible to implement which, though they could count on a sympathetic response in Hungary, could not be expected to be taken seriously by those abroad to whom they were meant to appeal." (p. 78). Thus—so Galántai argues—the delegation deprived itself of the possibility of obtaining "minor corrections." (p.79). And more importantly (and crucially), it knowingly rejected the chance of "a policy of cooperation with neighbours, that did not give up ethnic principles and was based on more favourable economic conditions". (p. 101).

József Galántai's disarming honesty compels the reviewer to speak his mind. I entirely agree with his criticism of the treaty and of the actions of the Hungarian delegation, but I cannot accept the conclusions he draws. That is, I cannot accept that the Allied Powers (in particular, France), nor the smaller nations surrounding Hungary, would have responded to an appeal for a revision of the treaty, founded on ethnic arguments. For, is it not true that the Rumanians wanted to push the border even further west, or that Czechoslovakia wanted to obtain Sátoraljaújhely, Miskolc, Balassagyarmat and Vác, and Yugoslavia to keep Pécs, Mohács and the surrounding region which Serbian troops had occupied? Was it not Czechoslovak and Yugoslav joint policy to form a "Slavic corridor" in four western Hungarian counties stretching from Pozsony (Pressburg-Bratislava) south to Nagykanizsa? The negotiations between Rumania and Hungary in 1919, France and Hungary in 1920, and Czechoslovakia and Hungary in 1921, demonstrate that the lack of a satisfactory settlement was due at least as much to the will of these countries and France, which backed them, as to that of Hungary. In these negotiations the Hungarian delegation took up an essentially ethnic position, which the others nonetheless found unacceptable. The same happened again in 1945-46, when (what were still) democratic go-

vernments faced each other. The suggestions of the United States on border realignment based on ethnic principles were sternly rejected by Czechoslovak and Yugoslav politicians—despite their 1942 and 1944 promises—nor was Petru Groza, Prime Minister of Rumania willing to negotiate on even one simple border village. It follows that the author of these lines is more pessimist about the future than József Galántai, though I hope that he will be proved right, and that his hopes "friendship-building, present mutual work of the peoples of the Danube valley," will come to pass. If this proves to be the case, Trianon, and all the conflicts amongst the nations between Germany and Russia, will no longer be in the focus of attention. If not, however, if the more pessimistic forecasts prove correct, as recent events in Yugoslavia seem to suggest, than many more books will be written on the Treaty of Trianon after these by Mária Ormos and József Galántai.



Guy Schraenen, Belgium

Andrew Kerek

Hunglish in Ohio

Miklós Kontra: *Fejezetek a South Bend-i Magyar Nyelvhasználatból* (Chapters on Hungarian Language Use in South Bend). Linguistica Series A. Studia et Dissertationes, 5. A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Nyelvtudományi Intézete. Budapest, 1990. 188 pp.

"The streets were filled with Hungarian shops, and the local Hungarian culture thrived. Guest actors from Hungary performed in the Magyar House... There were grape harvest festivals and beautiful dances, and picnics where the Hungarians of our City got together and socialized..." So reminisced an oldtimer Hungarian in a "modest little jubilee album" published on the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Hungarian community in 1882 in South Bend, Indiana, U.S.A. That community is virtually no more. It has almost disappeared, just like—as Joshua Fishman pointed out 25 years ago—"outside of Cleveland, Chicago, and a few other East Coast Centres" the Hungarian community "has ceased to exist as such" (*Hungarian Language Maintenance in the United States*, p. 41). With the vestiges of its founding immigrant generation rapidly dying out Kontra found "hardly a soul" of oldtimers in South Bend in 1986—the vital infrastructure of cultural and linguistic maintenance within this community is vanishing as well: the churches, schools, clubs and societies, newspapers and radio broadcasts, the entire vital network of communal institutions and social interaction. Yet another immigrant ethnic enclave, like so many others, gobbled up by the American melting pot.

As I leaf through the student directory of a well-known state university in northwestern Ohio—located not too far from South Bend, Indiana—I find Hungarian names jumping at me from almost every page: Agardi, Agoston, Andrassy, Babicz, Bakos, Balint, Balogh, Barosh, Beres, Besenyodi, Bihari, Biro, Bodnar, Bokor, Boros, Chizmar, Csikos, Csontos, Dobo, Dobos, Donat, Duda, Ferencz (Ference, Ferens, Ferenz), Ferenczy, Ferko, Gyurko, Halas, Hornyak, Horvath, Kardos, Kasza, Kiss (Kish), Kocsis, Komives, Kovacs (Kovach, Kovatch), Kristof, Lengyel, Madaras, Magyar, Mesaros, Miklos, Miko, Molnar, Nagy, Nemeth, Orban, Palinkas, Papp, Perlaky, Pesti, Rusnak, Szabo (Sabo, Zabo), Seebock, Simko, Soltesz (Soltis), Szanti, Szekely, Szentkiralyi, Szucs, Taricska, Tokar, Toth, Varga, Zollos. Bearers still of Hungarian names and of Hungarian blood, but of Hungarian language and culture no longer. Perhaps hailing from the many small Hungarian "South Bends," from the once vibrant Magyar neighbourhoods in this part of the U.S.A.,

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these are native American students that may still remember a word or two of the language of their parents or grandparents, but who have irreversibly crossed the threshold into the mainstream of American life. With their complete assimilation, the fate of the many Hungarian South Bends in America, of their unique language and ethnic folkways, is irrevocably sealed.

Like anthropologists of the Boas era trying to provide descriptions of the scores of American Indian languages and cultures on the verge of extinction early this century, recorders of this displaced Hungarian culture, its language in particular, have no time to waste. It is to Miklós Kontra's credit that he took an interest in studying what is left of the Magyar language spoken in the vanishing Hungarian neighbourhood in South Bend, Indiana, and recognized the urgency of the task. A well-trained sociolinguist with an excellent command of English and comfortable in the American milieu, Kontra spent a total of nine weeks in the early 1980's interviewing people of Hungarian descent in South Bend and collecting language materials from 40 informants on audiotapes and questionnaires. The result was a dissertation completed in 1986 and—with some revisions—now published. It is intended by the author to be a "preliminary study" to a subsequent comprehensive monograph on Hungarian-English bilingualism in North America, one that is expected to include the other side of the bilingual coin as well—the use of English in the American Hungarian community. As such, *Fejezetek* admittedly provides only a "broad outline" rather than a comprehensive, in-depth coverage of salient features of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and communicative intercourse in Hungarian language usage within this community. Even so, the wealth of language materials presented, and Kontra's thoughtful pursuit of theoretically plausible explanations of their unique characteristics, make this study a major contribution toward recording and understanding a displaced yet unique element in the global Hungarian linguistic heritage.

Fejezetek is not for popular consumption. Its core is the kind of detailed analysis and interpretation of language data that is appropriate to a linguistic dissertation. It is intended primarily for linguists or for readers with some linguistic training, and as such it both accommodates expectations of technical precision (for example, with each example precisely referenced, like "1SXl27 SB128B511") and teems with scientific (linguistic) jargon, which makes some of the reading rough going for the uninitiated. Organized into eight chapters followed by a lengthy appendix and a selective bibliography, the book describes the background of the study and the methods and circumstances of data collection among Hungarians in South Bend, and then devotes a chapter each to a discussion of specific aspects of language structure and use observed in the materials collected: phonetics and phonology (sounds), morphology (word formation), syntax (sentence structure), vocabulary (word stock), personal names, and communicative interference and failures. Some photographs and facsimiles, including that of a page from the "modest little jubilee album" cited above, provide visual touches of South Bend's fading Hungarian heritage.

Kontra approaches his task by taking the modern standard Hungarian language as the base and then asking how specific usages and linguistic behaviour, found in South Bend, differ from the standard. This seems simple enough, and certainly one can collect scores of interesting examples of the ways folks in South Bend (or, for that matter, in other old Hungarian communities in North America) use the Magyar language differently from folks in Budapest. Many readers will be familiar with Hungarianized

American English words ranging from káré (<car) and *drájvol* (<drive) to *elmuffoltak* (<move) and *ritájeroz* (<retire), cited by Kontra and noted in other studies before, that have become (often derogatory) trademarks of this off-standard variety of the language. The problem the linguist faces, Kontra included, is how to make sense of such observed linguistic phenomena (beyond simply listing them), how to identify some general patterns that will help us better understand both what happens in the language under study and what can happen to the language of any small immigrant community thrust in the middle of a mainstream culture that exerts powerful assimilative influences. Kontra recognizes the risks in generalizing given the scope of his corpus, and he ultimately shies away from drawing major conclusions based on his study—an outcome that he realizes the reader can "rightfully expect" (p. 127) and one that will no doubt frustrate those looking for more global statements on consequences of language contact in the context of particular social and cultural conditions.

Yet this is not a book devoid of theoretical discussions. Throughout the study the observed language forms of South-Bend Hungarian are discussed within the conceptual and terminological context of the published literature on language contact and inter-language effects. In its general approach and much of its analytic terminology, *Fejezetek* (especially the treatment of morphology and the vocabulary) is reminiscent of the seminal works of Einar Haugen (*Bilingualism in the Americas*, 1956 ; *The Norwegian Language in America,* 1969) and of Uriel Weinreich (*Languages in Contact*, 1953), whose concepts of borrowing, transfer and interference in a bilingual sociocultural setting (such as English vs. Hungarian in South Bend) are especially germane to this study. Some of Kontra's examples of South Bend Hungarian raise classical questions of interpretation. To cite just one, where is the line between "code switching" and "borrowing"? When does a word become a "loanword"? Is *farmer* an inherited Hungarian word or was it "borrowed in South Bend? Where did *kombájnos* come from? And how do *sport/szport* sort out? And *balkon*/balcony? At what point, after how much use, has a new word become "integrated" into a language? Kontra's corpus contained 56 occurences of *káré* (auto) but only one of *árterájdesz* (arthritis): are both to be considered "legitimate" words of this language? Such language data pose difficult problems in coding and interpretation that Kontra was often forced to resolve intuitively (and hence speculatively): *szport* coming from the lips of an old Hungarian immigrant woman of peasant origin (who may not have known sport back in the old country) is likely to have been borrowed in South Bend; and *antenna,* with stress on the first syllable, is likely to be standard Hungarian whereas *anTENna,* with the English stress pattern, borrowed. Many examples in this book raise important questions of theoretical interest to language contact studies and contribute interesting new materials to the scholarly literature (let us hope that, in one form or another, this study will see print in English).

Clearly, some of Kontra's interpretations are tentative and inconclusive—one good reason why he is gunshy about making summative pronouncements. A phonetic example will shed a bit more light on the difficulties in an investigation such as this. In American English, a voiceless plosive sound (*p, t, k*) before a stressed vowel is normally pronounced with a more naticeable puff of air (aspiration) than in Hungarian. Did this English phonetic rule influence South Bender Hungarian pronunciation? Kontra found that in a reading test of five words, 17 of 27 informants did indeed aspirate their Hungarian word-initial *p*'s, *t*'s and *k*'s—7 of them in all 5 words, 1 in 4 words, 2 in 3 words,

1 in 2 words, and 6 in 1 word. So some informants always aspirate and others never do. Still others do some of the time for no particular reason. This kind of apparently random free variation is unsettling to a linguist, whose discipline is based on the assumption that much of language is structured and the occurrence of variant forms predictable. Indeed, Kontra checked whether these variations in aspiration correlated with particular generations of speakers—old-timer Hungarian immigrants, '56ers, and Americans of Hungarian descent (these were the major demographic variables used throughout the study). He found that aspiration may occur among immigrants as well as the native born, and it may fail to occur among the native born as well as the immigrants. His conclusion regarding aspiration: you can't really draw any general conclusions.

In other cases, one can see definite trends. For example, virtually all informants pronounced their "r" sound as the Hungarian "rolling trill" rather than the American English "retroflex" sound; all immigrant speakers assimilated the -val/-vel suffix (*házzal*) whereas none of the American born did so (*házval*); errors in word order were twice as common among the native American born as among old-timer or '56er immigrants; and so on. There are, clearly, some patterns of loss vis-à-vis standard Hungarian that are linked to length of separation and other variables. Nevertheless, the case of aspiration points up one important consequence of the investigator's conscious decision to include in his corpus the fringes of language use in the community studied—fringes that may show wild variation and disuniformity and thus resist easy interpretation. Kontra rightly points out that the language of American Hungarians represents a continuum ranging from monolingual Hungarians to monolingual Americans, with numerous gradations in between. Instead of zeroing in on the middle of the spectrum of usage, the typical and the common, Kontra traces the variations outward, meticulously counting numbers or percentages of speakers who used this variant or that, and attempting to relate the variations to the speakers' backgrounds and even to the "style" of speech reflected in the elicitation of the examples (e.g. careful reading or spontaneous verbal responses to questions). It is especially this attention to linguistic variability on the peripheries as well as in the mainstream of language use, and his search for theoretically tenable explanations of these phenomena, that make Kontra's study a significant contribution to scholarship on the Hungarian language in America.

The city of Toledo, Ohio, used to have, and still has, a "Hungarian district" popularly known as "Birmingham" (named after a factory that used to be located there). Every fall Birmingham has a Hungarian Festival, with delicious ethnic food sold in booths along the street past Tony Packo's famed Hungarian restaurant and the majestic Hungarian St Stephen's Church, with dance groups clad in colourful Hungarian costumes entertaining visitors along the way. Thousands of people from Toled an the vicinity come here to enjoy flashes of the district's old culture. Yet one hardly ever hears a Hungarian sound any more. The South Bends and Birminghams of America beckon Kontra and other interested Hungarian linguists to pursue their mission here and record this heritage before the curtain falls. It should give them great satisfaction that they can now freely publish their findings without fear of reprisals—unlike the author of *Fejezetek*, who— some ten years ago—was forced to use a pseudonym to publish one of his language interviews for this study in the emigré magazine *Új Látóhatár*. Happily, that interview with informant No. 3S26 is reprinted as Appendix 7, under the author's real name, in the back of this monograph.

Tamás Koltai

The Great and the Little

József Sántha: *A legnagyobb* (The Greatest);
Miklós Hubay—István Vas—György Ránki: *Egy szerelem három éjszakája* (Three Nights of a Love);
Gyula Hernádi: *Csillagszóró* (Sparkler); Imre Kertész—Mihály Kornis: *Jegyzőkönyv* (Minutes)

The history of every nation includes great thinkers, statesmen and artists who provide the matter for passionate disputes to many generations coming after them. Occasionally one of these figures serves as a source for arguments to settle present controversies. Sometimes, long after historians have settled on a final pedestal for the great man, artists remove him from there so that we can see his face more closely, the real features and not those that have been distorted by the passing of time. One of the historical figures prone to such distortion is Count István Széchenyi, "the greatest Hungarian", in the words of his contemporary, Lajos Kossuth, who was in certain respects his opponent. Széchenyi appears in history textbooks as a statesman and author of political works, father of the 19th century reform movement, Kossuth as the leading figure of the 1848 revolution and subsequent war. Born in Vienna, Széchenyi was the founder of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the builder of the first permanent bridge between Pest and Buda, author of econo-mic works, founder of a shipyard, winter port and modern flour mill using steel cylinders, promoter of free trade and industry, advocate of a National Theatre, moving spirit behind the National Casino and horse-racing, a liberal-minded aristocrat. The paradox of his life was that, while his reforms instigated the anti-Habsburg revolution, his loyalty to the Habsburgs prevented him from taking part in it. Reluctantly he accepted, however, the post of Minister of Public Transport in Kossuth's revolutionary government. After the Hungarians, led by Kossuth, collapsed in 1849, Széchenyi passionately criticized the regression and oppression, while moving slowly to a nervous breakdown. He spent the last years of his life in a private mental asylum in Döbling, Austria, from where he smuggled out lampoons on the monarchy. In 1860 he committed suicide; after his death the belief that he had been assassinated by the Austrian government gained ground. (See *NHQ* 124).

Many plays have been written on Széchenyi, one by Ferenc Herczeg, the popular and officially glorified writer of the first half of the century, who wrote his own figure into the character. A play by László Németh is concerned with the last days in Döbling; when it was revived by a Budapest theatre soon after the 1956 revolution, in the spring of 1957, the pro-

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duction was quickly banned. In the early 1970s, István Eörsi broke with the pathos of the earlier presentations and sketched a Széchenyi who was ironical and self-ironical, who, sizing up his own position and that of society, prepares for his suicide.

The same situation has been chosen by a young writer, József Sántha in his *The Greatest*, which received its first performance in the Budapest Chamber Theatre on the bi-centenary of Széchenyi's birth. Essentially the piece is a single long monologue for which the other characters provide cues. A search for the manuscript of *Blick*, a political lampoon written in German, is going on but this only provides an excuse for the author to draw his (and Széchenyi's) conclusions on the state of the nation. Ranged against him in the play is Doctor Georgen, the owner of the discrete private asylum, whose wife, Rosalie is in love with Széchenyi. Georgen's fits of fury, his nervous dashing to and fro, reveal rather more insanity than the fluctuating lethargy and euphoria of the Hungarian count who, needless to say, provides a sharp and clear moral and philosophical interpretation of the world around him.

The piece is rather an essay in dialogue form than a play; chunks of Széchenyi's own works are even included. The basic situation simply allows for Széchenyi to conduct his internal reflections out loud. That said, the underused István Holl eschews the customary pathos, plays Széchenyi behind a shock of beard and the sensibility that expresses a sarcastic, bitter view on life.

The theatre which thirty years ago was the venue for the first night of *Three Nights of a Love*, the musical by playwright Miklós Hubay, poet István Vas and composer György Ránki, has long since closed its doors. At that time, the play was termed a "musical tragedy", indicating the birth of a very Hungarian version of the musical. Those who remember that production will do so with blurred eyes, not only because it brings back their youth, but because of the memory of the play's extraordinary success.

The central figures are poets ("hapless dreamers, bodies with youthful radiance, young blossomers to the Sun", as one of the songs describes them), members of a talented generation destroyed by the Second World War. Poets who translated Apollinaire in an earthly hell or in a narrow room facing the tenement house's air-shaft, lit by the sun every morning for a moment. Meanwhile, they dream of journeys to Italy, of Venice, Miramar, gondolas and the tiger-striped cathedral of Siena. Or simply of life. While the city was burning around them, they tried to set people's minds on fire with their poetry. But "inflammable materials" were not allowed to be stored in the attic, and paper is inflammable. So the only judgements passed on their poems were those of air raid wardens enforcing fire regulations, and of condemnatory "chief critics".

Miklós Hubay created his protagonist Bálint out of several living figures. Most of his features are presumably borrowed from Miklós Radnóti, the poet who perished on a forced march by his labour unit. Bálint and Júlia, his wife, bombed out of their flat, find themselves in the alien world of the abandoned home of the upper middle-class Zalaváry family. Though they "hang" a Picasso on the wall (drawing it in chalk), they do not succeed in creating an island of peace and security. All they want is to live only for one another and for mankind. In vain does Melitta, wife of a Supreme Court judge say that "wherever there is a Picasso on the wall, the Zalavárys are not at home," for everywhere outside "the Zalavárys" are at home, and poets cannot live for each other and for mankind. The play is about an age which stood against the poetic when "to thrust, to cut, to hit are the ultima ratio". Bálint might manage to avoid the call up for forced labour (they might per-

haps get some money to bribe a corrupt sergeant major who would fiddle an exemption), but he has neither the inclination nor the strength for this. Instead he uses the money (raised by selling his favourite books) to pay for the printing of the first poems of a young fellow poet, and he himself goes off to meet his death.

In one scene, Doctor Szegilongi, the Supreme Court judge, play acts as the Chief Justice. (Melitta likes it very much when her husband is acting as the chairman and intones "in the name of the Hungarian Holy Crown".) Here one is supposed to shudder—even if only in fun—if Bálint the poet would really stand before the tribunal, which would really be compelled to condemn him for subversive activity against the social order. In this revival in the National, however, the judge does not intone "in the name of the Hungarian Holy Crown". This would go against the current worship of the Holy Crown. Nor does Bálint tell Júlia that they will live for one another and for mankind; he omits mankind, a concept of no great importance at the moment here. This makes a nonsense of Júlia trying, two acts later, to recall what Bálint said. The production also omits the fascist emblems of 1944, and the ironical Hitler salutes involved in one of the songs have become half-hearted, lest one should be able to recognize the time when "at a time when all was dark, youth was an island of splendour", a time in which the sound of guns replaced criticism. As a result, it is no longer clear why and, especially, when Bálint has to die.

Nor is it clear what prompted the National to revive the play if it refuses to confront its essence as a musical documentation of the period in question. It is unacceptable to "sterilize" the play under the pretext of the director's interpretation, robbing it of its period. Perhaps it is too much to speak of an interpretation. Apart from obscuring the part of the play he dislikes, Elemér Kincses finds filling space, building up situations, setting a song, adjusting entries and exits, providing actors with business when they have no lines to speak, beyond him. Why does not the National Theatre stage something else if it has no faith in *Three Nights of a Love,* and why can't it stage it if has faith in it?

Gyula Hernádi's 1970s play, *Csillagszóró* (Sparkler), combines politics and satire, thriller with science fiction. He himself modestly calls it a play. A gang of criminals hijack an aircraft, with us, the audience on board. The anti-matter to destroy the world has disappeared. Christ, Buddha, Confucius meekly smile from the human forms of the secret service leaders taken as hostages. The Pope, the Dalai Lama and Chiang Kai-shek (in the present-day version, Teng Hsiao-ping) refuse point-blank to intercede for the hijackers to be given an island. A massacre ensues. Blood flows, by reference to Landsteiner's blood-typing, based on the stricktest racial theory, to Vivaldi's music. There are garnishes of ideological arguments on the Idea, on aggression and on resistance.

Hernádi is playing—amongst other things—with literary quotations. He borrows his three impotent divinities from Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan.* Maria, the communist stewardess, voluntarily dons the yellow smock of the *untermensch,* so too does Father Riccardo Fontana the yellow star in Hochhuth's *The Governor*. The physicist who steals fissile material is the cousin of Dürrenmatt's physicists. There is also a measure of Hitchcock, routine information taken from daily news items, science-fiction and political jargon and, of course, a cautionary tale.

It is with the last that there seems to be some trouble. As long as Hernádi tells us that all kinds of danger lie ahead for man—he may be kidnapped, blown up, brutalized, humiliated in the name of racist theories, used for crude experiments—and that this shocks him, we are

with him. When he says that we have to rebel against this, we fully agree with him. But when we look at his example, we feel confused. How should one behave in a hijacked plane so as not to commit the error of the uninterfering gods or of the pilot who simply carries on his way? What in fact are we to do? Maria the communist offers resistance and dies, but this may also mean (who knows whether it means the same thing today as it did fifteen years ago?) that revolutionary action inevitably entails sacrifice. Fortunately, the *physicist ex machina,* who has stolen all the antimatter necessary to destroy the world, turns up to reassure us that he will continue his thieving ways and will turn it all into sparklers.

One would do better not to consider *Sparkler* a problem play, rather the product of an ironical brain, in which the only thing to be taken seriously is play as such. That, however, can and must be taken seriously. The bloodcurdling, grotesque or shocking moments have their place, they make one accept the theorems being sprung on us, and we join in intellectual gymnastics whose exercises Hernádi creates through a combination of clever moves and a measure of bluff.

The play originally received only one performance in 1976, and has now been revived by a company that has changed its name from the Thalia to the Arizona. The production tries to come up to the author's playfulness and the ambitions of a management that hopes to succeed with sponsors' support. The director, Gábor Pintér, struck a deal with MALÉV, the Hungarian airline, and the first performance was actually held airborne, on the Budapest to Larnaca run. This cost the audience a packet and naturally induced a good write-up. Other performances followed in the small studio hall of the theatre, fitted out as an airplane cabin. At the entrance you are received by a stewardess who writes out a boarding card for a 747 flight of Arizona Airlines. The hijackers rise from their seats and insult the "travellers". The play tries to involve the audience, it is after all about them—about mankind. However, the moralizing is much too conventional to be taken seriously—even in sport. In the same way as Chiang Kei-shek was exchanged for Teng Hsiaoping, the play can be validated with the same ease for the 1990s, radically different from the 1970s. But there is a question here which ought to be answered: what are we, simple humanity, to do, exposed to constant threat, during our "journey", if those upon whom our fate depends —gods and politicians—forsake us. The question remains unanswered.

The historical grotesque of today's Hungarian man in the street causes tragicomical moments in an unusual production. The new studio theatre of Budapest's famous Katona József company has opened its gates with an act of homage. The writer Mihály Kornis, author of first class plays—*Halleluia, Kozma, Hungarian Ring Dance*—recites a story, *Jegyzőkönyv* (Minutes), by his older colleague, Imre Kertész. The short story appeared in a periodical in the spring of 1991, inspired by the author's own experience, the hassle which he, an average Hungarian citizen, had to endure on the Budapest-Vienna train for having on him the undeclared sum of 4,000 Austrian Schillings (£ 200). The story is a staggeringly sincere reflection on the humiliation and, despite the collapse of the communist system, final disillusionment of an East Central European intellectual. The "co-author", Mihály Kornis, possessor of a director's diploma but who has never produced any plays, carries off this cruelly bitter, ironic work with stage presence and, above all, literary empathy and indignation. A single person on stage speaking on behalf of another man and representing all of us—viewers and citizens. This makes theatre, indeed, this makes real theatre—emotional, impetuous and cathartic.

Károly Csala

A Metaphor for Europe

Meeting Venus— and the Director

István Szabó's new film, *Meeting Venus* (Találkozás Vénusszal), is hardly a Hungarian work. He directed it at the request of David Puttnam, using an international crew; the film, released by Enigma Productions, was distributed internationally by Warner Brothers. Regardless of where it will be shown, this film is European. A sort of united Europe experiment. A French paper called it a "true European film," and a German weekly judged it to be "the film of Europeanness," and an English daily hailed it with "at last, a European film."

How did you cast the two leading roles, Niels Arestrup and Glenn Close? Indeed, was it you who did the choosing, or were they recommended? No one succeeded in interviewing you while the film was being shot; David Puttnam simply didn't allow it.

The film's public relations man felt that the film should get its publicity around the time it was released and not a year before. I did not object then, and cannot fault his logic, although I know that this is not customary in our part of the world. For that matter, it is only natural that an international producer such as David Puttnam enjoys different rights than those customary in Hungary. Let me add that you need a special talent to be a good film producer; it is a real art, and what being a producer means is something I have learned now, from David Puttnam. The casting of *Meeting Venus* was done by myself, as was the case with all my films. On his part, he did all he could to make sure that I could make my choice in the best possible conditions. He advised me whenever I felt uncertain.

In Hungary, few had heard of Niels Arestrup, the leading man.

Three years ago I saw him in a supporting role in a French TV film, alongside Michel Piccoli and Martha Keller, and he was so good that I thought that I would like to meet him. Despite his Danish name, he is French—his father was a Dane who settled in France.

Glenn Close, however, is an American star.

All in all, I had about one week to decide on a female lead. When I was staying in London with him for this very purpose, David Puttnam asked all those English actresses he considered good to come and see me. In the meantime, of course, he put a huge quantity of videotape, provided by various agents, at my disposal. I saw many films and parts of films. I found Glenn Close so good—particularly in *Les Liasons Dangereuses*—that I suggested her. David told me what we could expect if in this, our European film, we cast an American

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star. They would accuse us of running after money, of signing on an American actress in the hope of box office success. He asked me to think it over for a day or two. After three days I still insisted on Glenn Close, and he was happy with my decision. We were aware that after the opening we would be accused of commercialism because of the casting of the American star. What could we do...?

I have been told by the cameraman Lajos Koltai that at their first meeting, the star politely wanted to explain to him how they customarily—that is to say, how one must—light her up. True, she soon caught on that she could safely leave the lighting to Koltai, that she could trust him.

Not even for a second did I sense any lack of trust on the part of Glenn Close. Three days after receiving the script, she telephoned to say that she would accept the role because she liked the part—and I'll continue by saying that throughout, she created a fantastic work atmosphere about her, something that I have never experienced anywhere. Glenn was on the set every day from the first minute of filming to the last, believing that there might be someone who needed her help, perhaps just her presence, a look from her. This became clear the first day. She had arrived jet-lagged from America, I thought I'd call her the next day, let her rest a bit; and so that's how we organized the day. She arrived the following afternoon, and I saw on her a look of startled incomprehension. "What are you all doing?", she asked. "We're filming," I answered. "Why? Without me?"—"Yes, but there are other scenes, too...", I started explaining. But she said: "Don't do this to me again. If I'm scheduled for the afternoon, I will get my make-up on in time, but then I'd like to be here, to see my colleagues, the people I'm working with.This is my job."

And what did the others say to this?

A good example is catchy. Everybody came to think it natural that we should work together that way. Glenn showed interest in each person, she knew everyone's birthday after a week, asked about their problems and concerns, from those of the lighting crew to her fellow actors. She figured this was her film, and it would be better if everyone was in top form. This attitude is altogether different from the one European, or, if you like, Central-European actors and actresses usually take. Here everyone wants to be the best on their own, and so, sure enough, sometimes even elbows the other actor out of the way. Glenn Close, meanwhile, stands beside the cameras if her colleagues need attention; she did not just give a cue to a girl in a supporting role, instead of the assistant, she recited the entire monologue for her—so it would go better. And, indeed, the girl did improve as a result.

*The film itself is about making art collectively. But not an experience in any way as pleasant as—so it seems—*Meeting Venus. *How was it like having to recall your own nightmarish Paris Opera production, which, after all, provided the core experience, and core idea, for this film*?

No more than twenty per cent or so of my original experience is in this film; the actual event was far more chaotic, unbearable, than that in the film. Then there was, effectively, no concern for the music, nor for Wagner, nor for the performance, only for the murderous ambitions of various parties and groups, of which those of us responsible for the production of the opera, were the victims—or, if not actually the victims, then the helpless puppets. There is just an ever-so-slight indication of this in the film; this is not what we aimed to talk about but, rather, about what happens if people from various countries in Europe come together encumbered by their different ways of thinking, experiences, roots, languages, prejudices, inferiority complexes, in order to work together for a common goal. So it was this sort of "European metaphor" that excited us: to describe

figuratively what can happen if, in today's Europe, full of oppression, chauvinism, stupidity, nationalism, jealousies, antagonism—what happens if all this comes together, at last, in the interest of a beautiful goal? We wanted to prove if the circumstances do exist, then, despite everything, team work is possible. Ultimately, our film team can also be seen as such an experimental group, and the conclusion to be drawn from our work is that by getting to know each other in a joint production, prejudices are overcome. This result is quite positive. (Of course, I am now talking not of the film, but of the filming.) The acceptance of various attitudes in team production is a really fine experience, it inspires you with exuberance. During filming, a tremendous amount of love was accumulated. We hope this is reflected in the film. If not, we are at fault. There is no character in the film whom the viewer cannot love by the end. Ultimately, these are all talented people who want something and strive and struggle for it.

Can you tell us something about your co-scriptwriter?

I wrote a one hundred and eighty page script, which Michael Hirst conjured into a script tuned to the ears of English speakers and more concise than mine. In all seriousness, I have never seen anything like it: I had the feeling that this immensely talented young man crossed out not a single word—and still one hundred and fifteen pages emerged from one hundred and eighty. Everything was there that I wanted, only a bit more concisely. I wish I always had a Michael Hirst!

After an international production you made or, rather, are making, a modest Hungarian film: Emma and Böbe.

The complete and, I think, final title will be *Double Nude, Emma, Böbe* (Kettős akt, Emma, Böbe). It's about two woman teachers who live in a teacher's hostel. For *Meeting Venus* we really got everything, we were able to work under good conditions; I even succeeded in persuading David Puttnam that we should film in the Budapest Opera House instead of Sao Paulo. They say, and not without reason, that the most beautiful European opera house is in Sao Paulo in Brazil, and it stands empty—but this way I was able to work with people I've become accustomed to over ten years. If we could work like this under ideal conditions, then—so we figured—now, after this, we should try making a film with the smallest possible budget with which a film could possibly be made. We were quite severe with ourselves, not even buying a train ticket unless it was absolutely essential. *Emma and Böbe* was made in such a way that no one spent even a farthing that isn't apparent on screen. As for how the film will turn out, we'll see. Naturally, it can't be as visually spectacular as my previous films. Many don't even believe that a film can be made spending as little as we spent. But, finally, it must be possible, because it has to be. If we want to say something important, then we must find the way to say it, to overcome difficulties.

Why did none of your pupils turn into directors?

I have not taught for a long time now. I happily accept everyone, however, who wants to join me in my work. They're always coming from film-schools outside Hungary, but never anyone from Budapest.

Your generation tried in an entirely different way to follow in the footsteps of their elders.

When we started our working lives, opportunities were limited. Now there is television, advertising, and the rest. Of course, we had the desire to learn from our elders. We were happy to work with Máriássy, Makk, Herskó, Fábri, for we felt that it wouldn't do any harm to us to learn what they kmow from them Young people today, however, think that they cannot learn anything from us, indeed they think that what can be learned from us is dangerous to them and would pull them back. So

The Paris Scandal

Back then the Paris Opera House was ravaged by great inner political battles. Everyone was more interested in knowing who would have control of the house than in the successful performance of the opera. On the day of my arrival the corps de ballet went on strike, then the orchestra, then mysterious technical problems occurred practically every minute. Each day the atmosphere became more oppressive, and we got to a stage where we were only a hairbreadth from a breakdown of all work.

Later, when David Puttnam contacted me with his script for Chesterton's The Man Who Was Thursday*—which we planned to turn into a film—I told him of my hellish experience directing* Tannhäuser *in Paris, just so as to cheer him up, for he was in a rather bad mood that day. He happened to be working on a British-French coproduction, and the quarrels with hypercritical bureaucrats and various interest groups had virtually made the whole thing an impossibility. My Parisian story was still terrible to think back on—even across the therapeutic distance of time—but we managed to laugh over it. I noticed David's tension diminish. "Maybe," he said, "this will be our next film." "No," I said, trying to ward off the idea, "that's only an anecdote." But I saw that he was serious. This convinced me all the more (later too, while I was working on the script) that only with the help of humour that creates a distance could we hope to overcome the arrogant, petty-minded and pompous bureaucrats who flood the world, and the absurd situations they have created. If we laugh along with the public over something which otherwise makes for despair. If we demonstrate that talent, creative will, can get the upper hand over every intrigue and pettiness of everyday life.*

it is not out of laziness or stupidity that they avoid us, but out of, for them, a philosophy. The consequence of a decision. And we must recognize this. Every generation has its own language, whether in literature, painting, film, or even in the street, for that too changes from one generation to another, and if the present generation feels that our language impedes them, shackles them, then we can do nothing about it. We have one possibility left: to say what we want to say in themost lucid, pure, and simple way in our own language—for what we want to say is, after all, quite complex. We have experienced much from, say, thirty-eight to the present, such complicated things have happened to us, that we don't even quite understand how and what could have happened. Still, we must try to tell it all simply, so that others will understand.

You mentioned Félix Máriássy; a photograph of him plays an important role in some scenes of Meeting Venus. *What did those who did not know who he was say about it?*

When they learned that he had been my teacher, they were quite moved. And letme add that I had placed three pictures down before Glenn Close, and asked her to choose from among the three male faces the one she could imagine as being of a former lover, as the fantastic composer whose charismatic personality made such a big impact on her, and her new lover as well. And Glenn Close pointed to Felix Máriássy. Ultimately, she was the one who chose the photo of Félix Máriássy for its role in the film.

A conductor and a female singer are the leads in this film. Thinking back, perhaps even in your first short films, the music did more than just accompany pictures and words, it occasionally inspired ideas. What does music mean to you?

I love classical music. There is so much disorder in our lives, I see such chaos about me, that the order and purity of classical music, I might say, all but plays a mental-hygenic role for me. But only classical music. Obviously, what happened in childhood also has much to do with this. My love for opera presumably comes from the fact that as a child I was often taken to the opera by my uncle. As regards *Meeting Venus,* let me say again that the choice of Wagner and *Tannhäuser* was quite conscious. Precisely because we consciously wanted to make a European film. We knew that the viewer would immediately ask, why Wagner? For this century has already exploited Wagner in the interest of dark political forces. We chose Wagner and his music because we thought that one very important aspect of the history of Europe, our Europe, is this ambivalent Wagner—this enormously talented, this brilliant genius Wagner—albeit also pregnant with much ill-will. Wagner encompassses all the tensions inside us as well. *Tannhäuser*, too, got into the film by way of conscious decision, not only because once in the past I had directed it in Paris—after all, angone can learn a new opera in a month... Only that we developed the script of the whole film in such a way that it would exactly correspond to the problem raised in *Tannhäuser*. In this film—and this I regard as quite important to emphasize—each and every character is a Tannhäuser. A person living in insecurity, an artist in whom insecurity dwells, of whom the world asks; are you Venus, or Elizabeth? Spirit, or matter? Whereas in the reality of life there is no distinction between the two—quite the opposite, the two are united! In short, we tried to make a film in which the main characters are in the same situation as Tannhäuser, or else, one in which all live in doubt, no one knows how to order his or her life. Everyone is burdened with problems of ideology, the uncertainties of Europe today. They can't decide just what to do. Now, however, they have a common goal, to bring a performance into being. The Tannhäuser parallel is, of course, valid only up to a certain point. In our modern-day story one cannot know who is Venus and who Elizabeth. The sins of Venus are showered upon the retreating Tannhäuser by the wife, though she should be Elizabeth; and in the film, the lover—that is, Venus—sings Elizabeth's aria. We tried, in other words, to mix the two, so that it would become clear they belong together.

Why is there a need for a love story in a film that expresses European chaos?

It was an important realization on our part that only with the help of passion can we free—and understand—the creative process, and unravel the secrets locked in a creative work. We can free the immense energy, the uncertainty, love, jealousy, and desires, all of which, in our case, Wagner had locked into *Tannhäuser*, only by grasping them with our own emotions and passions. Knowledge of a discipline, professionalism are insufficient. A little plus is needed which only a person can provide who has felt the torments and the beauties of the suffering, jealousy, self-reproach, the uncertainty that Wagner himself might well have felt when telling the story of Tannhäuser. The love story, then, is necessary so that out of the terrible chaos which is Europe today, out of this world made up of prejudice and encumbered with anxieties, we can create something which can, finally, stand as one, despite petty persons and passions: despite this, there will be a solution! There is a something which instantly vitalizes a performance: this is love.

Eszter Fontana

Beethoven's London Piano and the Viennese Piano Makers

A factory-made fortepiano owes its fame to its having been a gift on several occasions: first to Beethoven, then to Liszt, and finally to the Hungarian National Museum. The story is well-known and is mainly to be found in Beethoven's *Konversationsbuch,* from which are taken here all quotations not otherwise attributed.

Thomas Broadwood, a respected piano maker of his time, met Beethoven a number of times during his visit to Vienna in the summer of 1817. As a result he conceived the idea of making the great master the gift of a piano. He consulted a number of pianists of repute to advice him on choice; their names are recorded on the right side of the instrument, above the tuning plank: Kalkbrenner, Ries, U. B. Cramer, Ferrari, and Knyvett.

In December of that year the instrument, a six-octave mahogany grand piano of approximately seven feet six inches, triple stringed throughout, was sent on its way, only to arrive in Vienna half a year later, after a prolonged and difficult voyage.

This instrument remained in Beethoven's possession until his death. According to his various visitors, Beethoven repeatedly spoke admiringly of it, even after receiving a more modern piano in 1823 from the Viennese piano maker Conrad Graf. In 1824 he was visited by Rellstab, his friend and librettist, who recalls this visit in his autobiography:

"...I approached the instrument and placed my hand on it. I quietly struck a chord with my left hand, to see if Beethoven would turn around. It seemed that he had not heard it. A few moments later, he turned to me and said, 'This is a beautiful piano! I received it as a gift from London. Just look at these names!... This is a wonderful gift,' he said, looking at me, 'and what a wonderful tone it has.'"

Piano makers eagerly and jealously awaited the opportunity to see the instrument of the famous London workshop, so different from the Viennese pianos in construction, mechanism, and damping, hence in its sound and in the playing style it required. Broadwood was at its peak at the time, the largest such factory in the world, with the enormous annual production of 1,000 to 1,500 pianos. Though they were sent as far as Italy, these instruments were unknown in the Danube lands, the market for Vienna's piano makers.

The Broadwood piano was taken directly from the Vienna customs house office to the workshop of Nanette Streicher for repairs to the damage sustained during its journey. Though Streicher was herself a pianist of repute, Beethoven entrusted Cipriani Potter, an English piano virtuoso, in Vienna at the time, to try out the instrument. By 1818, Beethoven had already begun to use a conversation book to communicate; he still had some hearing,

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but insufficient to allow him to judge the piano's quality. Potter tells us that his report to Beethoven was touched with disappointment: the instrument had a beautiful tone, but could not hold its tuning.

Later descriptions also allude to the piano's novel character. "Stein (Mattheas Andreas Stein, the piano maker) says that he has learned much from your piano" (February 1820). "This instrument has an entirely unique sound" (Friedrich Wieck, 1823).

Nonetheless, this powerful piano was not loud enough for the composer, whose hearing was rapidly deteriorating. According to his notebook, several of his piano-maker friends had tried to make the instrument louder through small modifications and reconstructions. "I would like to know if you can hear the piano better if the hammers are not leathered." "If you can spare the instrument for a time, Stein would have a look at it. He hopes that if he releathers it, it will be as it was before. He is afraid that it will not be like the Englishman's."

In April and May of 1823, Stein reglued the broken hammers, sealed the offending cracks, and cleaned and restrung the piano, thus bringing it to a playable condition, but only for a time. "I am curious to hear how your piano sounds in the theatre" (Stein, 1823).

The piano virtuoso Ignaz Moscheles arrived in Vienna in 1823. Conrad Graf, one of the city's most respected piano makers, offered him one of his own pianos for the performance, but on the condition that he not play any other instrument. Moscheles thought, however, that the recital would be much more interesting if he could show the Viennese audience the difference between the Viennese and London piano. Upon hearing of this, Graf withdrew his offer, but the recital took place as planned with Wilhelm Leschen's piano. Moscheles borrowed Beethoven's London piano, which Leschen restrung for the occasion: "Moscheles was at first reluctant to request your piano, but then said that it would cause a great sensation in London to hear that he played it here." "Your piano turned out so perfectly that it has inaugurated an important new era. It was a joy to hear Moscheles's performance on it. Leschen fitted it out entirely with Berlin strings, and you too will be pleased to hear how it sounds now," writes Anton Felix Schindler to Beethoven a few days after the concert. The performance was a success, but the London piano did not cause quite the excitement that Moscheles and Beethoven had expected. "People say that the piano has a good tone, but no force" (Karl van Beethoven). "I think the reason he improvised on the English piano was to focus the audience's attention on its tone" (Karl van Beethoven, December 1823).

Leschen undertook the repairs necessary after the Moscheles concert, with results not satisfactory either to Beethoven or his piano maker friends. The conversation books record the exchange between Beethoven and Schindler: "Stein thinks that Leschen should have leathered the hammers, because (the concert) wore them out." "If you could spare it for a time, Stein would have a look at it and releather it. He thinks it would then be just as it was. He is reluctant to leather; I don't think he does it like the English, though it's true enough that he is adept at the mechanical work." "Neither Streicher nor Graf is to lay a hand on my English piano."

Johann Andreas Stumpff, a London piano and harp maker of German origin, a student of Broadwood, arrived in Vienna in September 1824. His notes on this visit provide valuable information on the state of the piano: "We spoke about pianos. Beethoven complained of the imperfections of the grand. 'I myself own a London instrument.' 'Come, it's in the next room, in a highly miserable condition.' When I opened it what a sight I was faced with! The upper part produced no sound at all, and the snapped strings were tangled up

together like a thornbush whipped by a tempest."

One month later, Beethoven requested of Stumpff in a letter that he advise Mattheas Andreas Stein with a view to renovating the London piano. In fulfilment of this request, Stumpff twice visited Stein, who took offence on being so advised. Stumpff realized that Stein's experiments with the mechanism were destroying rather than improving it. Stein himself also came to see this but was unable to correct the situation. Stumpff also prepared a diagram of the internal workings, for which he considered repairs to be necessary. "Stein, to whom Stumpff explained the entire inner workings of the English pianos — because he himself hadn't the faintest notion about them — is lately nowhere to be found. I imagine he is using what he has learned in his own work now" (Karl van Beethoven, mid-December 1824).

Ultimately, Graf began a complete restoration of the piano in January 1826. He had recently purchased for himself a Broadwood piano, for a fortune — 1,100 old Florins — which enabled him to study its workings. This is presumably why Beethoven trusted him, and why Graf himself undertook the task. "The piano is in such bad condition that the renovation could take months. Graf says that the work done on it is terrible, but still he would like to set things in order as much as possible. In the meantime he will leave me his quadruple-stringed instrument, which he will bring on Tuesday" (January 1826). "The English piano needs a complete restoration, and now will finally get a mechanism appropriate to it" (Karl van Beethoven, April 1826).

Graf promised to complete the restoration of the piano and the *Schallmaschine* (an amplifier) by May, though in fact they were ready in June. Beethoven treated his instrument ruthlessly, for which neither the English piano nor the Viennese pianomakers could be held responsible.

"Once he put his hearing aid on he played ex tempore for me for more than an hour on the pretty much knocked about large, long grand, with a powerful, puffy tone which the City of London had presented him with." (Friedrich Wieck, September 1826).

The piano later came into the possession of C.A. Spina, a music publisher, who gave it to Liszt in 1836. In his will Liszt left it to the Hungarian National Museum, where it has been since 1887.

Later times have been no less cruel to the piano, which has sustained the efforts of a long series of piano repairmen. Finally, in 1991 the English restorer David Winston completed the work which has been in process for 175 years.

In May and June of 1992, Melvyn Tan, another London pianist, will present a concert series with the London Classical Players under the direction of Roger Norrington. Both the concerts and the exhibition at the Tate Gallery have been made possible by the generous support of John Broadwood and Sons and Thorn EMI.

Paul Griffiths

Annie Fischer Reissued on CD

The great performances are those that provoke great listening: listening that seems to search into every fold and feature of the music's landscape. To praise a great performer, therefore, is to risk praising oneself as observer—or at least so it seems after spending some time with recordings made by Annie Fischer, whose absence of self-projection (paradoxically one of her most distinguishing features) exacerbates this problem of finding the source and the reason for so much being heard. The old cliché that she provides a direct line to the composer will not do. These recordings, made in the 1950s and 1960s, are evidently of their time, not only in terms of technical quality but also in performance style: this is clearly an artist who came to maturity before the Second World War (Fischer was born in 1914), one whose precepts were formed in a musical culture with a very different notion of "authenticity" from our own. Nobody now could play like this, or should try to: that, of course, is some part of the appeal of Fischer's recordings, that they preserve another approach.

But in that she is no different from any other pianist of her age. What singles her out is, rather, her seriousness, which is not just a matter of her abstinence, the abstinence that makes it inconceivable to describe her as a "virtuoso", even though her playing can be quick and brilliant. Seriousness is not just an absence but a presence, a fullness of determination and meaning, a gravity. Sometimes one can hear this in just one chord: the opening chord of the slow movement of Beethoven's C minor piano concerto, for instance, which seems to grow louder as it resonates, and which opens up a whole new world that Fischer is going to extend into and unfold. Or one can detect it in a care for correspondences: for a clear outlining of imitative polyphony in two adjacent Mozart concertos, the D minor and K.467 in C (and in the almost Bachian manner she brings into her cadenzas), or for a correspondence between harmony and tone colour in a quite extraordinary performance of Schubert's late B flat sonata, where the first movement in particular seems to move through wide plains of sound distinguished by a matching of colour to the prominent harmony of the period.

Enough. All that really needs to be said about these recordings—which are special treasures when Fischer made so few—is that they are available. The two Mozart concertos are included with the D major rondo K.382, all three works with fine musical support from Ervin Lukács and the Budapest Symphony Orchestra, on HCD 31492. The Beethoven concerto, with the same orchestra now conducted by Herbert Esser, comes with two weighty solo pieces, Mozart's Fantasy and Fugue in C major and Schubert's Impromptu in F minor, on HCD 31493. Then the third volume, HCD 31494, is devoted to sonatas by Schubert and Liszt, the latter in a 1953 recording, whereas all the rest date from Fischer's early fifties. The quality of that 1953 recording is not so wonderful, but for the sake of the Schubert, this is the place to begin.

Paul Griffiths *is* NHQ*'s regular record reviewer.*

He tore open the envelope, came back onto the porch, stopped on the threshold and was silent. He was very pale; he sported a black Kossuth fringe of a beard and within this black mourning border his anxious face gleamed deathly pale.

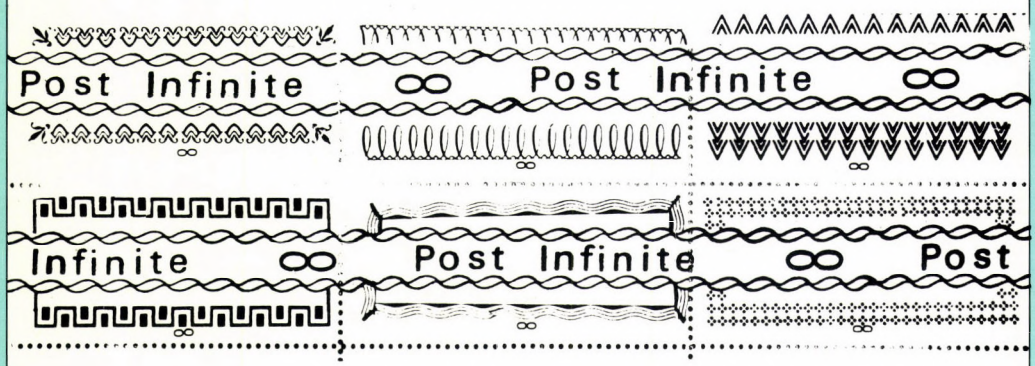
"What's the matter, Endre?" asked my father.

"They've killed the heir to the throne," the Deputy Lord Lieutenant said and made a nervous, discouraged gesture.

In the great silence the Gypsy band sounded as close and loud as if it were there in the garden beside us. Those present sat around the table stilled and motionless with their porcelain onion-figured tea-cups in their hands, as though frozen in a deadlock, as in a dumb-show. I followed my father's gaze; he stared with hesitant, irresolute eyes at the sky.

The sky was pale blue, a washed-out summer-blue. There was not even a fleecy cloud floating upon it.

From: Confessions of a Man of the Middle-Class, by Sándor Márai, p. 25.



Mail Art by Géza Perneczky